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DOCTRINE AND LIFE

A STUDY OF SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL TRUTHS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IN THEIR RELATION TO CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

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TO

THE SACRED MEMORY OF

My Mother

MY FIRST AND BEST TEACHER IN RELIGION

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
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PREFACE

THE aim of this volume is to present the principal doctrines of Christianity in their correlation with the Christian life. These doctrines have therefore been approached from the point of view of the Christian consciousness rather than from that of philosophy or criticism. Our main question in this study is not, How might the Christian philosopher justify the belief under review? nor, How might the biblical scholar elaborate and defend it? but, What is the adaptation of the given doctrine to the needs of the soul, and its use in the Christian life? How is its truth attested in experience?

It will thus be seen that, while the volume deals with the subject-matter of theology, it differs considerably in its aim from theoretical treatises on Christian doctrine. Although I have often referred to the grounds on which Christian doctrines are held, and to some of the ways in which they may be defended, my purpose has not been chiefly apologetic. It has rather been my effort to illustrate the value of certain fundamental doctrines for Christian thought, life, and character. This practical value of the doctrines I have endeavored to exhibit by suggestion rather than by elaborate analysis and discussion. I have aimed so to present these doctrines as to suggest and justify their

practical religious significance and value. The purpose of the work is more fully illustrated, and its method more fully explained, in the first chapter.

I have written in the firm conviction that the Christian religion involves certain great doctrinal truths which represent the deepest realities of the universe and of human life. While insisting upon the inability of the mind fully to comprehend and define these realities, I have also insisted that we need not, and, indeed, cannot, refuse to think about them, and that serious and reverent thought upon them is useful and rewarding. I have written in the belief that the truths of Christianity are a great treasure for the mind and heart, as well as a guide for the regulation of conduct. I hold that the Christian religion includes all our life in the largest sense of that word. It does not consist merely in a certain method of outward action, or in the performance of certain duties technically called religious; far more fundamentally does it consist in an inner spiritual life, quickening into new power, and equipping for its highest exercise and use, every faculty of the soul. With this conception of religion it is easy to show that doctrine is inseparable from life, since reflection and thought are themselves important parts of life.

If, now, it be true, as I believe it is, that Christianity is the absolute religion, and that its truths represent eternal realities and universal principles and laws, then is our discussion really a study of the leading factors and forces which are concerned in producing and fostering the life of the Spirit in man.

G. B. S.

YALE UNIVERSITY, *March* 1, 1895.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Relation of Doctrine to Life	1
II.	"The Soul Naturally Christian"	17
III.	The Belief in God	34
IV.	Revelation and the Bible	52
V.	The Character of God	71
VI.	The Trinity	87
VII.	The Person of Christ	105
VIII.	The Work of the Spirit	122
IX.	The Fact of Sin	138
X.	The Atonement	158
XI.	The Intercession of Christ	176
XII.	The Doctrine of Faith	191
XIII.	The Doctrine of Love	203
XIV.	The Doctrine of Prayer	216
XV.	The Future Life	228
Index		245

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DOCTRINE AND LIFE

CHAPTER I

THE RELATION OF DOCTRINE TO LIFE

What is the relation of doctrine to life; of theology to religion? To this question we hear, in our time, the most diverse answers. One of the commonest statements is, that Christianity is not a dogma, but a life. On the other hand, we find that most churches expect of their members some manner of assent to certain doctrines, and that special tests are applied to those who are to assume the functions of teaching and government. The strifes of sects and the disputes of theological parties have proceeded upon the idea of the importance of correct doctrine. The Christian church still remains divided into a multitude of independent organizations, not, as a rule, because the members of any one of these doubt the Christian character of the members of the others, but because they differ from them in one or more points of theory or belief. These differences, however, have not commonly been regarded as merely intellectual or theoretic, but as having some important relation to Christian life and character.

The Roman Catholic, for example, does not deny the

Christian character of sincere Protestants. He admits the saving value of the faith which is exercised by them, and of the ordinances which are administered in Protestant communions. He does not deny the final salvation of true believers in Christ wheresoever found. He does, however, assert that the whole Protestant conception of the church is false. He affirms that God has committed to the church certain divine graces and benefits to bestow upon her children, and that the Protestant, by remaining outside the church (as he conceives of it), necessarily forfeits those benefits, and suffers in his life and character in consequence. The Roman Catholic Church thus regards its views of the organization and authority of the church, and of the nature and administration of its ordinances, as having important bearings upon the spiritual life. Its whole attitude toward Protestant organizations thus assumes that the differences between it and them have important relations to religious character and welfare.

On the other side, intelligent Protestants do not deny the Christian character and acceptability to God of sincere and devout Catholics. But they hold, in contrast to Catholic belief, that the direct access of all souls to God, through the one only Priest, Jesus Christ, the doctrine of salvation by divine grace alone on condition of faith, and the right of free thought and of private judgment in theology and in Biblical interpretation, are truths of vital importance for the encouragement of Christian thinking and scholarship, and for the development of Christian character. Thus the Protestant dissent from Roman Catholic doctrines assumes that its characteristic positions are practically

important; that it makes a wide difference in all one's life and thinking, whether he accepts the Catholic or the Protestant view of the church and its sacraments, of the Pope and his authority, of the priesthood and its functions, of the Bible, its use and interpretation, and of many related points of divergence.

In like manner, it would be easy to show that the differences among Protestants have been commonly assumed to involve important practical consequences. The Calvinist charges upon the Arminian a restriction of the absolute sovereignty of God, and a denial of the sole efficiency of God in salvation, which imperils the believer's assurance and security. In turn, the Arminian affirms that Calvinism makes God an arbitrary despot, and virtually excludes, by its doctrine of unconditional election, the freedom and responsibility of man in respect to his destiny. Both these systems maintain that important religious consequences are involved in their respective philosophies. In like manner, the various divergences among sects and parties have arisen and have been perpetuated, because they were believed to involve matters of principle, and to be of practical importance in their relation to the religious life and character.

And yet we discern under all this diversity of opinion and practice, a fundamental unity. Christian life and character are essentially the same in Catholic and Protestant, in High Churchman and Dissenter, in Calvinist and Arminian. It is certain that if their differences are important, they are, at most, only relatively so; they do not essentially involve the presence or absence of genuine religious character, sincere Chris-

tian living. Those who insist upon a certain church order as of special value and importance would find it difficult to prove that the favor of Heaven has not been granted as abundantly to those who do not possess this advantage as to themselves. If the presence and power of divine grace are to be judged by the actual development of Christian character and the actual fruits of Christian living, no monopoly of this grace can reasonably be claimed by the representatives of any particular church or creed as against all others. What we find, then, when we look abroad upon the Christian world, is a very general insistence upon doctrines and practices as being important to the Christian life, and, at the same time, a real development of that life under many diverse forms of doctrinal belief and of ecclesiastical organization and usage. In view of these facts of Christian history the question recurs: What is the real relation of doctrine to life?

We may observe at the outset that the reality and importance of this relation cannot, in general, be denied, unless we are prepared to maintain the entire separateness of theory from practice, of thought from conduct. That no such general separation can be justified becomes almost self-evident when a case in point is presented. Who can doubt, for example, that it makes a great difference with a man's life whether he believes in a personal God in whose moral likeness he is made, or only in a blind, unknowable force of which he is a product? Such beliefs as the belief in God touch the very core of character; they involve, beyond question, our whole conception of life's meaning, value, and destiny. Similar in respect to its importance for

all thought and action is the question, what kind of a being God is. Whether God is a Moloch or a gracious Father makes an incalculable difference to the religious life. The same may be said respecting belief in such a fundamental doctrine as that of revelation. Who would maintain that it is a matter of moral indifference whether or not one believes that God has revealed to man his will and nature? that the well-being of the world is in no way involved in the question, whether the Bible really represents a divine revelation, or is the mere product of man's own thinking upon religion? Whether Christ was a divine Being, or only a wise and good man? whether he was what he claimed to be, or a pretender? whether man is sinful and guilty, or only unfortunate and imperfect? whether his continuance in sin is attended with moral peril or not? All these are questions which bear powerfully upon life.

We must, then, in general, admit and maintain the importance of doctrine in its bearing upon life. Not all doctrines, however, are equally important in this relation. They are important in proportion as they concern what is central and essential in Christian thinking and living. The importance of various doctrines, when judged by this test, will, of course, be differently estimated by different men. I shall make no effort to determine precisely the relative importance of the various doctrines which I am to review. I shall, however, assume, on the basis of the general consensus of the Christian world, that there is a set of doctrines which hold a close relation to the religious life and character. Of these doctrines I shall review those which seem to me to be most essential in Christianity,

and shall aim to indicate their bearing upon the religious life. I shall dwell mainly upon that nucleus of doctrine which the great mass of Christians in all ages and churches have commonly considered to be closely correlated to the Christian life, and whose importance may therefore be presumed to have been attested by centuries of Christian thought and experience.

Bearing in mind this general distinction between opinions which can be shown vitally to involve Christian living, and those which are, at most, but remotely related thereto, and fixing attention on the former only, let us now consider the nature of the relation between them and the actual life of religion. Let it be remembered that I am here speaking of such fundamental doctrines as that of God, of revelation, of Christ, of sin, and of salvation.

The doctrines of Christian theology represent the efforts of the human mind to define the content of revelation, and to describe the principles and processes of the religious life. Christian doctrine has always to take account of these two great facts, — divine revelation and Christian experience. The question as to the relations of these two facts in theology is warmly debated in our time. Into that discussion it is aside from my present purpose to enter. I shall take up the truths which are commonly believed by Christians to constitute the essential subject-matter of revelation, and shall dwell upon their relations to the Christian consciousness, — to Christian thought, experience, and life. Looked at from this side, theology is an effort to construe the facts of religious experience. It is the approximate intellectual equivalent of the forces and

processes which are operative in the religious life. The doctrine of God, for example, is an effort to define the knowledge of God which is involved in the Christian life. The doctrine will naturally have in it certain ideal elements; that is, it will be an endeavor to define the highest conceivable Christian conception of God; it will surpass the idea of God actually cherished by most persons; it will aim to embody that notion of God which corresponds best to the full content of revelation, and which is best adapted to minister to progress in actual Christian living and thinking.

It will thus be seen that theology and religion are related to each other as theory to fact or reality. It involves no disparagement of theology to say that it is theory. In all human life theory and practice are inseparably conjoined, and react powerfully upon each other. That a vicious theory may be harmful is evident, since it may suggest or involve motives and methods of action. All theory is a product of thought, and thought is most closely related to conduct. There may, indeed, be theories which are so remote from all actual human interests as to involve no practical consequences, but this cannot be said of those which concern the more essential truths of religion. Moreover, the view so commonly advanced, that a certain theory may be inherently right, but that the opposite of it may be justified in practice, is a sophism which no sound philosophy can justify. It is important to adopt in theology and morals the soundest and most adequate theories which are attainable. In our time indifference to doctrine seems to be thought by many to be the mark of supreme devotion to truth. But indifference to doc-

trine is indifference to thought on the themes of religion, and religious thought can never be wisely disparaged in the supposed interest of religious life. I grant that it is important to recognize the limits beyond which we cannot go in our efforts to describe the nature and action of God and the mysteries of our own being. But these limitations do not preclude all thought about those realities. If we know *anything* about them, we must have theology. If we know *nothing* about them, how can we have even religion?

The relation of theology to religion may be compared to that of psychology to the facts of mental life. The science which we call psychology is an effort to describe and interpret the methods and laws of the mind's actual working. The two are not to be confounded, but neither are they to be separated. It would also be vain to disparage psychology as being purely speculative and useless. Some sort of psychology must always exist where men are intelligent and thoughtful enough to turn their attention in upon the phenomena of their own mental life. All the objections which are made to theological doctrine can be made, and quite as plausibly, to mental philosophy and to metaphysics in general. The limitations of our knowledge, the variations in theory, and the indefiniteness of the results, may all be urged as objections, and quite as cogently in the one case as in the other. It is vain to urge, in a comparison of the two sciences, that, because theology attempts to deal with God, and with a world of transcendent realities, while psychology deals with facts which are directly known in consciousness, psychology may be defended, while theology must be discarded; for religion also has it sub-

jective side, and its facts, even with this limitation, challenge the effort to describe and interpret them. Theology cannot be wholly banished, unless the religious nature of man is utterly denied or ignored, as psychology cannot be wholly discredited, unless it can be shown that man can know nothing about himself.

As long as man remains a religious being, and a thinking being, there will be theology of some sort. But a special occasion and incentive to theological thought must arise when one adopts any specifically Christian ideas concerning God and man and duty. It is true, as we have said, that theology is theory, and that religion is life; that theology is the intellectual construction of the realities which in religion are known and experienced. But so long as the life and experience which we call religion remain, and so long as the mind thinks about them, there will be theology or doctrine. It is also true that religion is primary and theology secondary; that the actual religious life and character are of first importance, and that the definition or description of the realities which they involve is less essential. The main concern of the Bible, for example, is religion rather than theology. But it would have been utterly impossible for the Bible to accomplish its end except by the teaching of much theological doctrine. The teaching of Jesus concerning the fatherhood of God, and that of John concerning God as love, have an immediately practical or religious aim, but they are not, on that account, less truly theological. All these teachings — the most practical of them — involve some view of what God is, of what God does, and of why God does it. It is utterly impossible to teach religion without teach-

ing, at least, the elements of theology, as it is utterly impossible to live the life of religion without believing, and more or less fully defining to one's self, some doctrines. The most unreflecting believer has some idea about God, some conception of what kind of a Being he is, and of what he has done in revealing his goodness and love; some idea about his own relations to God, and the duties which spring out of those relations. Those ideas, however crudely conceived or inaccurately defined, are theological. I can conceive of a man having a theology without personal religion, but not a religion without theology.

The objections which are so commonly heard in our time against doctrinal theology are really aimed, in most cases, at that over-subtlety and over-confidence in theological thought which have certainly been quite too common. When, for example, theology attempts to explore the interior nature of God, and to make a psychology of the divine mind, it is natural that the effort should provoke dissent. Doctrinal theology has often exposed itself thus to the charge of presumption. It has sometimes attempted to construct a fully rounded system of thought concerning God's nature and action, involving a complete philosophy of the universe. It has sometimes assumed to solve well-nigh every mystery, and to give an answer to almost every question which human curiosity might suggest. Of course, nothing of this sort can be done. To so ambitious a task the powers of the human mind are quite inadequate. It is proper and necessary that the limitations of theological thought should be recognized and even insisted upon; but the recognition of these limitations is something

very different from a repudiation of theology altogether, or from a general attitude of indifference toward it.

I cannot help thinking that expressions of indifference to theology from teachers of religion, and made apparently in the supposed interests of religion, are very ill-considered. We may wisely seek to shun all untenable theology, whether untenable by reason of its denials, or by reasons of its excessive affirmations and over-confidence; but we should shun this sort of theology, not in the spirit of protest against all theology, but in the interest of more rational and defensible doctrine. There has been a great deal of objectionable theology in the world — objectionable, in some cases, on account of its lack of evidence, in others, on account of its conflict with evidence or with the best instincts and intuitions of the human heart. But so also has there been a great deal of objectionable moral philosophy in the world; yet this fact could hardly be urged as a valid reason for declining altogether to search for the grounds of the right and the good, or for refusing to study the nature and scope of human obligations. The existence of false and pernicious systems of ethics might more properly be urged as a reason for the effort to construct the best and most salutary philosophy of the subject. That theology is always imperfect, often untrue, and sometimes even pernicious in its teaching, is no reason for renouncing its pursuit, but rather a reason for cautious but persevering zeal in its study and elaboration. If much of the thinking concerning God and man and their relations has been unsatisfactory, then there is the greater occasion for those who believe in the value and neces-

sity of religion to define, as accurately and helpfully as possible within the limits of human knowledge, these great realities with which religion is concerned.

In the light of these considerations, I believe it will appear that doctrine and life bear very much the same relation to each other in religion as thought bears to experience in any sphere of human interest and action. What we do cannot be uninfluenced by what we think. Especially true is this of religious opinions and beliefs; since they pertain to a realm to which belong, to so great an extent, the motives and principles of action. Even if men do not often fully embody their religious beliefs in conduct, it is nevertheless true that such beliefs exert a powerful influence upon character. Nor do the virtuous lives of some men, who are reputed to be without a religious belief, prove the contrary. The number of men who are destitute of religious belief is not so great as is commonly supposed, and in many cases the practical fruitage in life and character of inherited and traditional belief is still seen in lives which give no sign of positive attachment to them. In many such cases, however, it is easy to see that the power of ancestral faiths still persists, even though they are no longer consciously cherished.

Thus far I have spoken of doctrine and life as if they were generically different. I have considered "life" more in its outward aspect, as conduct or action. Even upon this method of regarding the subject, a close relation between doctrine and life may be established. It appears to me, however, that when we inquire more closely into what "life" fairly includes, the relation appears to be even more intimate; in fact, that life

necessarily includes the formation of doctrines or beliefs, because life includes our thoughts and our convictions. The action of the intellect, to which we more directly attribute our opinions or beliefs, cannot, in actual fact, be separated from the motives and springs of action in the emotions and the will. Indifference to doctrine in the supposed interests of life rests upon a very narrow conception of what life is, that is, upon a very superficial analysis of human nature. Thought is a part of life, and a very significant part of it. If, as Matthew Arnold insists, conduct is three-fourths of life, thought is, at least, its other fourth. But to me Mr. Arnold's dictum seems to exaggerate the proportions of conduct as a part of life, unless conduct be made to include, not only behavior or action, but also that whole play of thought and feeling, of motive and aspiration, within man, in which action has its main source and spring. Life must not be narrowed to the limits of external conduct. The religious life is an affair of the heart, an affair of the inner man, before it becomes an affair of outward action or conduct. The inner life rules the outer life; the issues of life in action are from the heart of motive and desire. What a man does is rooted in what he *is*, in what he thinks and feels.

We may, therefore, justly claim that in the relation of doctrine to life something more is involved than the influence of Christian truth upon conduct. The relation of this truth to the inner life is even closer and more important than its relation to action. Our present subject, therefore, includes the adaptation of Christian truth to the wants of man's mind and con-

science, and its bearings upon the depth and quality of character. Religious beliefs — at least, some of them — bear an essential relation to the life of thought, feeling, and motive, and through these affect the issues of life in action. It is this close relation of truth to life, of doctrinal belief to experience, which I have intended to suggest in the alternative title of this volume. In this title it is implied that both doctrine and life are involved in religion ; that religion may be contemplated more on its intellectual side as involving the acceptance of certain truths, or more on its practical side as involving a certain spirit or temper, and certain modes and principles of action. Religion is many-sided, and should not be too narrowly defined. It should not, for example, be defined as consisting merely in the belief of certain truths, although it necessarily involves such belief. Nor does it consist exclusively in conduct, although it essentially involves conduct. It will thus appear that a study of the leading doctrines of Christianity, especially when they are continually regarded from the standpoint of Christian experience, may properly be called a study of the Christian religion.

The tenets of Christianity may be studied from various points of view. They may be presented with reference to showing their inherent reasonableness — this would be the method of philosophical theology. They may be considered with reference to the support which they find in the Bible — biblical theology pursues this plan. They may be approached more, as we shall seek to approach them, in the light of the constant inquiry, How is the doctrine in question correlated to practical Christian thinking and life ; not to the think-

ing of the philosopher merely, nor to that of the biblical scholar, but to that of the average Christian man? This inquiry involves to some extent, no doubt, a consideration of the grounds on which Christian beliefs rest; but it directly and primarily involves the question as to their value and use in forming a helpful working conception of Christian life and duty. The effort will, therefore, be constantly made to present those aspects of Christian doctrine which stand in the most vital relation to the best development of the Christian consciousness and character. By applying, even if only imperfectly, this principle of limitation, we shall avoid, to a great extent, the realm of religious controversy. Most of the disputes among Christians have related to points and theories which, as the facts of Christian history prove, have not necessarily involved, to any great extent, the interests of healthy religious thought and life; since, in most such cases, men of diverse views concerning them have been equally earnest in teaching the great *facts* which underlie the various theories, and equally successful in conforming their own lives to the requirements of the gospel. Under various theories of the origin of sin, for example, men have held with equal strength of conviction to the doctrine that sin is universal and guilty, and should be repented of and forsaken. A recognition of the fact of sin, and a clear conviction concerning its guilt and power, bear very important relations to practical Christian thought and life. But whether one believes, with the type of orthodoxy which has been most widely prevalent since Augustine, that all men actually and personally sinned in Adam, because all were seminally present in him as

the head of the race; or holds, with a later theory, that Adam stood forth as the representative of the race, and that all men sinned putatively in him, since he stood or fell for all his descendants, involves no interest of evangelical faith or of Christian character and conduct. One may withhold assent from both these theories and adopt some other, or may believe that no theory on the subject is feasible, without loss to sound and sincere Christian living or thinking.

With all the emphasis which we justly lay upon Christianity as the religion of a good *life*, we are not to forget the value of its truths as incentives to reflection and thought. In our busy age we may lay so great stress upon the outward acts and services of religion, as to obscure the importance of clear, well-considered thinking upon the nature, the elements, and the demands of our faith. Christianity offers its truths to us for our contemplation, for the invigoration of our minds, and the uplifting of our spirits, through the consideration of the highest themes which can engage our attention. The deeds and services which we perform in the world will be in no small degree dependent for their effectiveness and power upon the maturity of religious thought, the depth of the inner life, and the richness of the spiritual experience out of which they spring.

CHAPTER II

"THE SOUL NATURALLY CHRISTIAN"

In the very first chapter of the Bible we read that man was made in the image of God (Gen. i. 27). The terms "image" and "likeness" which are here used, imply that man's nature is kindred to that of God from whom he came. This kinship of man to God includes, at least, two great points of likeness: (1) man is a personal being, as God is; and (2) man is, like his Maker, a moral being. Let us briefly consider the significance of each of these points.

By a person is meant a being who is conscious of himself as having an independent power of choice and action. The stone and the plant have no consciousness of their own existence; the animal even has only a partial self-consciousness. He is governed mainly by impulse and instinct. He does not know himself. If the dog could say, "I am a dog," he would no longer be a dog; he would be a person. Man alone, of all beings on earth, is personal. He alone possesses the clear consciousness of himself, and the power freely to direct his energies towards the ends which he chooses. He alone is, in the true sense of the word, a rational being; that is, a being who knows himself as constituted capable of choice, of knowledge, and of thought.

The innermost nature of God we cannot, indeed,

know; but such revelations of himself as he has made, as well as all our knowledge of our own natures, justify us in believing that in respect to personality we are really kindred to him. What else can be the meaning of the statement, that in the beginning God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul (Gen. ii. 7)? In our own mysterious personality, the full depths of which we can never sound, the personality of God is reflected. Our conviction that God is personal, and that we are not living in a world which is ruled by mere blind forces, is inseparably bound up with the certainty that we ourselves are free, self-acting beings; that the human soul has a peculiar self-moving, self-knowing power which differentiates it from all lower orders of creation.

But man's kinship to God is still more clearly seen when we contemplate his moral nature; that is, his power of perceiving, distinguishing, and approving *the good* as opposed to *the bad*. This capacity separates man broadly from all inferior orders of being. The animal knows no *right* and *wrong* as such. He may have a keen perception, based on experience or training, of the consequences of certain actions; but it does not follow that he can recognize the inherent blameworthiness or excellence of anything that he does, or be moved by what is properly called a *good* or an *evil* motive. Consequently we never attach to the action of animals the notion of proper moral responsibility or that of guilt. If the master blames his dog for some misdemeanor, and punishes him, saying, "He knew better," all that he can properly mean is that the animal's action was contrary to his training. In such cases, half the reason for the

punishment is always the hope of preventing through fear the recurrence of the same act. That the animal cherished any wicked purpose in his action, or is capable of the feeling of guilt or penitence for it, cannot be maintained.

(With man the case is different. He is not only conscious of the power to choose between objects and actions, but he is conscious of a peculiar difference in their nature which we distinguish by the words *good* and *bad*, *right* and *wrong*.) This distinction between good and bad is the fundamental fact in morals; and the intuitive perception and application of it by mankind are the fundamental facts of all law, order, and civilization. This distinction, and the capacity of man to recognize and apply it, lie at the basis of all moral philosophy. It is these facts which give to the word *moral* a distinctive meaning which cannot be merged or resolved into anything else. The difference between right and wrong refuses to be transformed into the difference between pleasant and painful, or into the difference between expedient and inexpedient. The origin and persistence of moral distinctions cannot be explained by association, experience, or utility. The consciousness of them is absolutely fundamental in human nature. Man is a moral being, not by habit, not by calculation, not by fear of consequences, but by nature. He is so because he is made in the image of God, in whose being the principles of all right and truth have their seat, and in whose consciousness all that is contrary to these must be known as wrong and false. Man is made in God's moral image, because, in some measure, like God himself, he knows and approves the good in motive,

action, and character, while from it he distinguishes the bad as contrary to eternal law, and associates with the latter the idea of its desert or guilt.

These considerations prepare us to see the grounds on which it is maintained that man is naturally religious. If he is allied to God by nature, if, in some essential respects, he is like God, it follows that he is capable of knowing God, and of living under a sense of his guidance and care. The tendency of man to believe in a divine Being on whom he is dependent, and to whom he is responsible, and his tendency to regard this Being with reverence, and to render him some form of worship and service, are grounded in his kinship to God. The normal utterance of the soul is a cry for God, and no conviction of the human heart is stronger and more persistent than that of his existence and government. Thus human nature itself attests the fundamental truths of religion.

The great writers on religion in all ages have justly laid strong stress upon the native religiousness of man. Nowhere has this truth found nobler expression than in the fervent words of Augustine: "O God, thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee." [1] And before Augustine, Tertullian appealed on behalf of Christian truth to the testimony of "the human soul, naturally Christian," [2] that is, adapted by nature to religion. This thought he has elaborated in a striking passage. He summons the soul of man into court to give its testimony to its sense

[1] *Fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.* *Confessions*, Bk. 1 ch. 1.

[2] *O testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae.* *Apology*, Ch. 17.

of God, and to its conviction of its own divine origin. "Take thy stand in the midst, O Soul," he exclaims, "and say whether thou art a divine and eternal substance, or the very opposite of divine, a mortal thing; whether thou art received from heaven or sprung from earth; stand forth, I say, and give thy witness." He then proceeds to say that he seeks the verdict, not of the soul that has been warped and prejudiced by the tenets of some school, "trained in libraries, fed in Attic academies and porticoes," but of the soul which in native simplicity will utter its true natural feeling and conviction: "I address thee, simple and rude, uncultured and untaught; I demand of thee the things which thou bringest with thee into man, which thou knowest either from thyself, or from thine author, whoever he may be." "These testimonies of the soul," he adds, "are as true as they are simple; as simple as they are common; as common as they are universal; as universal as they are natural; as natural as they are divine." [1]

It would be difficult to find in all literature a more forcible presentation of the truth that man is by nature a religious being, than that which meets us in the pages of the ancient writer.

It is an impressive evidence of the religious nature of man that history brings us no record of any people on the face of the globe wholly without a religion. There have been individual atheists, but never an atheistic *people*. This fact can only be explained by holding that religion is natural to man. He has never been without it in some form, and never can be. Even those individ-

1 *On the Testimony of the Soul.* Chs. 1, 5.

uals who wish to have no religion seldom wholly succeed. There are times when their religious nature cries out of the depths of their unbelief. The materialists of our age who abjure Christianity still have at times words of reverence for the inscrutable "Power," the unknowable "Force," which seems to rule the world. For man to be wholly without a religion he must become something less than man.

There is something in human nature which leads us to reach out beyond the bounds of the visible, and to people unseen realms with realities which to the eye of faith are as certain as are the forms discerned by the senses. "All men are born in faith," said the philosopher Fichte, meaning that the exercise of faith is natural to man. It is this tendency to faith, this instinctive belief in the invisible world, which has always given, and must always give, religion its great hold upon the human heart. Christianity is, indeed, a religion of objective fact and revelation; but even revelation, in order to accomplish its end, must find in man the craving and capacity to appropriate its truths. It must meet and satisfy native wants. The certainties which it discloses must be such as man has, from impulses within himself, desired and sought to possess. Just as the outer world could never reveal itself to us except by a forth-putting of our perceptive powers which corresponds to the presentation of the realities of the universe to us, so God and the spiritual world could never become assured realities did not our natures yearn for them, and, as it were, go forth to meet the manifestations of the spiritual world which God is ever making to our spirits. We could never hear God's voice within

us, speaking of himself and of a spiritual order, if we were not akin to God from whom we came, and who has made us for himself.

If there were no capacity for faith in man, no deep and ineradicable tendency to belief in spiritual beings, there could be no religion; or, at most, religion would be a mere matter of conjecture and speculation, without the power of living conviction and confident hope. The counterpart of the truth that God has revealed himself to man is, that man has ever been feeling after God, if haply he might find him. I know of no finer expression of the truth that the soul of man, when it freely utters its own nature, cries out for God, than that which Longfellow has given us in the reminder that —

> "In all ages
> Every human heart is human,
> That in even savage bosoms
> There are longings, yearnings, strivings,
> For the good they comprehend not;
> That the feeble hands and helpless,
> Groping blindly in the darkness,
> Touch God's right hand in that darkness,
> And are lifted up and strengthened." [1]

We are thus justified in holding that religion, in the comprehensive sense of that word, rests upon facts of human nature which can neither be eradicated nor denied. These cravings, convictions, and hopes of the human heart constitute the capacity for religion, and the power for perceiving and appropriating divine revelation. The word of God in revelation is heard and welcomed because the human soul had been hoping to hear it. The well-springs of divine truth have refreshed

[1] *The Song of Hiawatha*, Introduction.

mankind, and satisfied its soul's thirst, because in all ages the eager cry of the human spirit has been that which is voiced in the Psalmist's words: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Ps. xlii. 1). Religion, therefore, does not stay in the world merely because religious teachers have uttered and propagated its truths, it does not stay in the world because philosophers are arguing for it and theologians defending it, nor would it leave the world if all these should argue against it. Religion is here because it is at once the life of God in man and the expression of man's own nature, and because the human soul attests its truth in experience.

But it may be asked, Has this native religiousness of man anything directly to do with Christianity? Is not its significance confined to mere "natural religion"? This question is partly answered by the consideration already presented; namely, that the truths of religion could not be revealed to man, and made effective in his experience, if he did not possess a natural aptitude for them. This fact alone would give his religious nature a very important relation to Christian revelation. But a much more essential relation even than this may be established.

It has been common among Christian writers to distinguish very sharply between "natural" and "revealed" religion, and to treat the former as a product of man's "unaided reason." But we may well question, with John Henry Newman,[1] whether the reason of man ever *is* unaided. Is it, indeed, probable that such is the case? Does it accord with the New Testament to

[1] *Oxford University Sermons*, p. 18.

believe that all goodness outside Judaism and historic Christianity is mere "natural" goodness, and that all religion outside these is a mere product of man's own mind untouched by any divine influence? For an answer to this question, let us turn to the two master spirits of the apostolic age, — John and Paul.

In the prologue of his Gospel, the Apostle John tells us that the light, that is, the goodness, mercy, and love, which dwelt in the person of the eternal Son of God previous to his appearance on earth, "was the light of men" (John i. 4), and adds (verse 9) that this true light lights every individual man. These verses certainly contain the idea that Christ is a source of light to men universally; that, in some way and in some degree, God reveals himself through Christ to *mankind.*

We find that John makes this idea of Christ's universal relations and activity the keynote of his Gospel. Calling him, in accordance with a method of speech current in his time, by the term "Word," he begins by declaring: "In the beginning was the Word" (John i. 1). Christ, the Revealer of God, the Saviour of men, does not begin to be at Bethlehem, and does not begin to work for men in Judea and Galilee. He was eternally with God and was God; he bore a part in the creation of the world, — which includes the men whom he is to save, — and the life that dwelt in him was the light of men. Sin soon invaded human life, and shrouded the world in moral darkness. This light of the divine Christ, however, kept shining on, piercing the clouds that veiled the human spirit, even though the darkness did not apprehend it (John i. 5). As the sun shines on

throughout the whole day, though clouds and storms may overspread the earth and darken our eyes to its brightness, so Christ through all the ages came invisibly, spiritually, into the world, and illumined the mind of every human being, so far as that mind was capable of illumination.

When, at length, he appeared in human form, he came first to his "own possession," as John calls the Jewish nation (John i. 11). They were "his own," because he had specially guided them throughout all their history, and sought to prepare them for fuller revelation. He had been their deliverer from bondage; he had gone with them in their wanderings in the desert, a "spiritual rock" of which they drank (to use Paul's expression, 1 Cor. x. 4); he had filled their temple with his glory, and inspired the visions of their prophets. They were thus "his own" by right; but they received him not. The fundamental idea which runs through this whole description is, that the history of the *world* is the real sphere of Christ's manifestation.

Scholars have been much divided on the question as to where the line runs in John's prologue between the thought of Christ's activity previous to his incarnation, and that of his life and work in the flesh. I do not think that any such line can be sharply drawn. The drawing of such a line is, indeed, made almost impossible by John's very conception of Christ's work. For him the temporal is comprehended in the eternal. The work of Christ in all ages is one work. It is continuous, unbroken. That which he did in the flesh is but a special form of that which he is always doing. It is, to use one of Horace Bushnell's words, a "transac-

tional" revelation of principles of life and being, which are eternal in his essence and perpetually operative. When one attains to this conception, there is little occasion to mark off sharply his earthly career from all that preceded it, since his work on earth is but a continuance of his unceasing activity in revelation and redemption.

The Fourth Gospel contains other illustrations of John's larger idea of the Christ. He treats the saying of the high priest Caiaphas, that Jesus should die for the nation (John xi. 50), as an unconscious prophecy, capable of being understood in such a sense that it would express the deepest truth of Jesus' mission. And this "prophecy" declared that the death of Jesus should not be for the Jewish nation only, "but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad" (verse 52). The apostle clearly implies in this passage that there is a true sense in which children of God among the heathen nations may be spoken of, and that the work of Christ contemplated uniting them into one fellowship. Our Lord asserts the same truth very explicitly when he says: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold," — not of this Jewish fold, — "them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd" (John x. 16).

Let me now briefly illustrate Paul's idea. He teaches that revelation is universal. Among the heathen, God did not leave himself without a witness to his benevolence and providence, but in the succession of the seasons, and the bounties of nature, taught them of himself (Acts xiv. 17). The course of history is also,

to his mind, a method of divine revelation (Acts xvii. 26). Above all, is the moral nature, the conscience, a point of contact between God and man (Rom. ii. 14, 15). That which men were capable of knowing concerning God was manifested to them through the creations of the visible world, which the reason of man is able so to interpret as to assure him of God's power and divineness (Rom. i. 19, 20).

But it may be asked, Had Christ anything to do with this general disclosure of God in nature and conscience? How can we doubt it when we read that through him all things were created (Col. i. 16), that in him all things consist (Col. i. 17), and that his work of reconciliation contemplates the unifying and harmonizing of all things and all beings that in all of them he might have the pre-eminence (Col. i. 18, 20; Eph. ii. 14–18)? In the epistles just cited, Paul strikingly depicts the world-wide significance of Christ, whose work it is to abolish the discords of human life, and break down the barriers that separate men from God and from one another, so that there shall be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ shall be all and in all (Col. iii. 11).

It seems to me very significant that this larger idea of Christ and his work is presented to us by the two greatest teachers of the apostolic age, — John and Paul. So far as we can judge, these were the two men of that time who had penetrated most deeply into the heart of the gospel, and had attained the widest and noblest conception of salvation and redemption through Christ.

It is evident that if we are to adopt these ideas of

Christ's relation to all mankind, and of his spiritual presence in all man's life and history, we must greatly enlarge our conception of Christ beyond that ordinarily entertained. We must not limit our idea of his person and work to the few years during which Jesus lived in human form among men. Nor must we be content to expand this notion by merely adding to it the thought of a continued spiritual presence and activity of Christ in the world since his ascension. We must carry our conception of Christ and his work back into the ages previous to his incarnation, and extend it, not to the Jewish nation alone, but to mankind universally.

And does not this view of our Saviour's world-redeeming mission best accord with our highest conception of the character of God? Why should we not think that God, as the absolutely good, the eternal sun of love and truth, the source of all light, pours down upon the whole world of souls his beneficent rays, illuminating, in different ways and degrees, all who open their hearts to his influence? Who can believe that God is light (1 John i. 5), and suppose that he shuts up his rays within himself, sending down only here and there a beam into the darkness of the world's ignorance and sin? To me it seems more consonant with the character of God to suppose that in such ways as are possible and fully known only to himself, the Father of spirits reveals himself to all men, and that men are responsible for the way in which they welcome or reject such light as they have. I am far from claiming that on any view of this subject which we may take, we can explain the enigmas of history and the mysteries of Providence; I am only urging that the idea of some

kind of a manifestation of God to all men accords with the conception of his universal benevolence.[1]

Now, if, as John and Paul teach, Christ is the medium of this universal manifestation of God, then all revelation is Christian revelation. Christ is the light which lights every man; not within the limits of historic Christendom, and within the bounds of Judaism merely, but in all nations and in all ages. In the early church the belief was common that God revealed himself in invisible ways, through Christ, to pure and lofty spirits in the heathen world. Justin Martyr says that Christ, who was and is in every man, was partially known to Socrates;[2] and Augustine declares that Christianity is as old as the creation.[3] This conception is but a reproduction of John's idea of Christ as the source of life and the light of men.

This view of Christ's universal relation to the race in revelation and redemption does not limit the unique significance of that special course of revelation of which

[1] The narrower idea of God's purpose of grace which was formerly dominant in theology, is well illustrated in the statements found in one of the letters of the eminent revival preacher, George Whitefield. He says: —

"I frankly acknowledge I believe the doctrine of reprobation, that God intends to give saving grace, through Jesus Christ, only to a certain number, and that the rest of mankind, after the fall of Adam, being justly left by God to continue in sin, will at last suffer that eternal death which is its proper wages. . . . Our Lord knew for whom he died. There was an eternal compact between Father and Son. A certain number (of souls) was then given to him as the purchase and reward of his obedience and death. For these he prayed, and not for the world. For these, and these only, he is now interceding, and with their salvation he will be fully satisfied."

[2] Christ, who was partially known even by Socrates, for he was and is the Word who is in every man, etc. — *Apology* ii, 10.

[3] Nam res ipsa quae nunc Christiana religio nuncupatur, erat apud antiquos, nec defuit ab initio generis humani, quousque ipse Christus veniret in carne, unde vera religio quae jam erat, coepit appellari Christiana. — *Retractions* I, xiii. 3.

the Bible is the product and record. That revelation, on the contrary, seems far more glorious when we remember that its central figure, Jesus Christ, is not merely an historic character like other men, who appeared in the world for a few brief years, and then passed away, but that he is the eternal Son of God, the medium of revelation to all men in all times, who in his incarnation reveals the Father in a human life, and works, as he himself says (John v. 17), in accord with the ceaseless working of the Father, for the salvation of men. If Christ is, and always has been, everywhere touching and influencing the souls of men, it is none the less true that he has spoken in his life and teaching on earth with unexampled clearness, and that this most adequate revelation is the standard by which we are to estimate all less definite disclosures which, by their very nature, we can but imperfectly describe and measure.

If, then, all revelation is, so far as it goes, Christian, and if man's religious nature constitutes a capacity for receiving revelation, it is easy to see a profound and true meaning in Tertullian's phrase (which I have adopted as a fitting title for this chapter): "The human soul naturally Christian." If, as John says, without Christ nothing was made that has been made, it is but natural to conclude that he is everywhere active in his world. And if he is the true light which lights every man, then must all goodness in men be due to his illumination. All forms of morality and all types of religion are the product of man's divinely given religious nature illuminated and quickened by the spiritual presence of the eternal Word. What, then, should

prevent us from magnifying the spiritual significance and work of Christ by regarding him as the source of all good in men, and by claiming that all goodness is, so far as it goes, Christian?

Religion has taken many forms in the world; but wherever there is a true spirit of worship and service, there we may affirm the presence of Christ, even though it be unrecognized. If Christianity is, by its very nature, the universal religion, then must all religion, so far as it is real and genuine, be Christian, and all goodness, all love, kindness, and helpfulness, must be Christian, whether called so or not, since the Christian religion is the life of love in fellowship with God. All religion must be essentially one, and all goodness must be essentially one. If this world was made, as Paul says, through Christ and for Christ, and if Christ is, and always has been, in his world, as John teaches, then let us speak no more of mere "natural goodness" and "unaided reason," but rather recognize our Lord in the true dignity and glory of his world-wide significance and activity, and believe without hesitation that wherever men, in sincere penitence and reverence, stretch out their hands to heaven, God sees the germs of that "faith" or acceptance which is the condition of entrance to the kingdom of his grace.[1]

[1] Those who have read the foregoing chapter with sympathy will be interested in the following noble passage from John Henry Newman: —

"He 'enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.' His are the dictates of the moral sense, and the retributive reproaches of conscience. To him must be ascribed the rich endowments of the intellect, the radiation of genius, the imagination of the poet, the sagacity of the politician, the wisdom (as Scripture calls it) which now rears and decorates the temple, now manifests itself in proverb or in parable. The old saws of nations, the majestic precepts of philosophy, the luminous maxims of law, the oracles of individual wisdom, the traditionary rules of truth and justice and religion, even though

embedded in the corruption, or alloyed with the pride of the world, bespeak his original agency and his long suffering presence. Even where there is habitual rebellion against him, or profound, far-spreading social depravity, still the undercurrent, or the heroic outburst of natural virtue, as well as the yearning of the heart after what it has not, and its presentiment of its remedies, are to be ascribed to the Author of all good. Anticipations or reminiscences of his glory haunt the mind of the self-sufficient sage, and of the pagan devotee; his writing is upon the wall, whether of the Indian fane, or of the porticos of Greece. He introduces himself, he all but concurs, according to his good pleasure and in his selected season, in the issues of unbelief, superstition, and false worship, and changes the character of acts by his overruling operation. He condescends, though he gives no sanction, to the altars and shrines of imposture, and he makes his own fiat the substitute for its sorceries. He speaks amid the incantations of Balaam, raises Samuel's spirit in the witch's cavern, prophesies of the Messias by the tongue of the sibyl, and baptizes by the hand of the misbeliever. He is with the heathen dramatist in his denunciations of injustice and tyranny, and his auguries of divine vengeance upon crime. Even on the unseemly legends of a popular mythology he casts his shadow, and is dimly discerned in the ode or the epic, as in troubled water or in fantastic dreams. All that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful, all that is beneficent, be it great or small, be it perfect or fragmentary, natural as well as supernatural, moral as well as material, comes from him." — *Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education*, pp. 96, 97.

CHAPTER III

THE BELIEF IN GOD

"The question whether there exists a Creator and Ruler of the universe, has been answered in the affirmative by the highest intellects that have ever lived." These words of Charles Darwin state an undeniable fact. But the conviction of the divine Existence is not a peculiarity of the "highest intellects." However we may explain it, some form of belief in a supernatural power is practically universal among men. Naturally enough, this belief appears in the most diverse forms, according to the differing native characteristics and mental and moral development of the people evincing it. Among the lowest tribes it emerges in the form of crude superstitions, the worship of animals and of inanimate objects. More developed heathen peoples have regarded the heavenly bodies or the elements as representing supreme power in the world. Highly cultivated nations, such as the Greeks, have developed elaborate systems of religious belief and worship by personifying and deifying natural processes and forces. In such forms of religion a keen appreciation of natural beauty and a native poetic feeling blend with the sense of the supernatural to fill the world with divine powers and agents. Each department of nature and of life is presided over by its appropriate

divinity, who is more or less completely identified in the popular thought with the functions and activities which are ascribed to him. Thus, Mars is the god of war, Neptune of the sea, Minerva the goddess of wisdom, and Ceres of the harvest. Apollo is the god of light, and the sun is conceived of as the fiery car in which he daily traverses the heavens.

But it may be asked, "How can such forms of superstition and polytheism be regarded as illustrations of belief in God? They seem rather to imply the existence of innumerable gods, and to involve the identification of these gods with nature." It is true that in such forms of religion the idea of the divine power which rules the world is not concentrated and unified into the conception of a single personal being, but is broken up and distributed so as to yield the notion of many divinities. But it is to be noticed that all forms of belief in a higher than human power, which presides over nature and the life of man, do, at least, illustrate the conviction of the supernatural among men. However gross the idea of divine power or powers may be, it represents man's native sense of his dependence upon some force or control which is superior to himself. The unification of the various divine potencies, as conceived of by the more primitive peoples, could hardly be expected. It is to be observed, however, that they are capable of unification, and that a distinct tendency to unify them is seen among the more reflective heathen nations. The philosophers of Greece, for example, speak of God as well as of gods, thereby showing a tendency to represent the various divinities as expressions or manifestations of one supreme, central divine power.

It is but reasonable to expect that peoples who are low in the scale of intelligence and moral development should possess only gross and crude ideas of divine power. Yet the same childlike reflection which leads them to associate this power with animal life or with natural processes, and thus to people the world with countless divinities, is capable, under enlightenment and training, of advancing to a stage in which it would elevate and combine all these various powers into the unity of a single supreme intelligence who governs all things, and directs them toward the realization of rational ends. That the "nature-peoples" are not able to carry their conceptions of supernatural power so far and so high, involves no objection to the claim that it is natural for man to believe in God. The form of this belief must always be largely dependent upon the conditions in which he develops it. But the cruder forms in which the belief appears are as real testimony to man's natural sense of the divine as are the higher and more intelligent forms.

This natural tendency to theistic belief bears a most important relation to Christian revelation. The Bible everywhere assumes the existence of God. Revelation always presupposes it as true and admitted. The biblical writers point to the evidences of divine power and goodness, not as arguments by which men may be convinced of God's existence, but as motives whereby they may be incited to worship and obey him. Christ and his apostles always spoke of God as if men universally believed in his existence, and needed but to have their imperfect conceptions of his nature enlarged and elevated. We thus see that Christianity, and what is

called "natural religion," have, in great measure, a common basis. In some way man possesses an idea, a conviction, a knowledge of God. A great Christian teacher does not hesitate to affirm that this knowledge is "manifest in" man, because God himself "manifested it to" him (Rom. i. 19). Christianity thus appears as the supplement of that knowledge of God which is native to the human spirit, and as the completion of the crude and imperfect worship and service which are based upon such knowledge. Man's religious nature, and the instinctive belief in the supernatural, are the permanent ground for Christianity's appeal to the human heart, and are, therefore, an essential theme in any study of the Christian religion.

Let us now, without adopting terms which are too technical, and without going into needless refinements, seek to describe the principal forms of thought in connection with which the conviction of the divine Existence asserts itself in the mind.

The contemplation of the external world probably furnishes to the mind the most immediate and obvious occasion for the belief in a divine Being. The phenomena of nature and the outward events of life are the facts which the more primitive peoples seize upon as showing the presence of divine power in the world. And to the most cultured minds the beauty, order, and adaptation which the physical universe displays, ever remain an impressive evidence of supreme intelligence and power. Especially has the contemplation of the heavens, with their retinues of shining worlds, evoked in the human mind in all ages the conviction of the existence of God. To this fact all history and literature

bear the most abundant witness. The principal divinities of mythology were associated with the sky, or were even identified with the heavenly bodies. The devout exclamation of the Hebrew Psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Ps. xix. 1), does not express this truth more strongly than did the English poet, Edward Young, when he said that "an undevout astronomer is mad." The famous saying of the philosopher Kant, that there were "two things which, the more he contemplated them, filled his soul with awe, — the starry heavens above him, and the moral law within," is not stronger in its testimony to the effect of the wonders of nature upon the mind, than are the words of the sceptical *littérateur*, Voltaire, who said, "The world embarrasses me, and I cannot think that so beautiful a clock is without a clockmaker."

Probably most persons, if asked what is the clearest evidence of the existence of God, would answer by appealing to nature. This wonderful world is ever before our eyes; its beauty and majesty perpetually confront us; and there are few minds so dull as never to have been powerfully moved by some of the grander aspects of nature, — the moonlit sky bejewelled with stars, the weird glories of the thunder-storm, or the fury of the ocean when lashed by the tempest. It is to the impression made upon the mind by "the things that are made" — the external world — that the apostle Paul attributes the belief of the heathen in the "invisible things" of God (Rom. i. 20). He declares that in all times the mind of man has clearly perceived in nature the evidence of "everlasting power and divin-

ity" — an assertion which the history of religions amply illustrates and confirms.

In discussing the grounds of belief in God, philosophy and theology have made great use of the fact that the contemplation of nature begets in the mind a conviction of the divine Existence. In connection with this fact two of the principal historical arguments for the being of God have been developed, — the argument from the relation of cause and effect, and that from the relation of means to end. To attempt a critical estimate of the logical value of these "arguments" would lead us into very abstruse considerations. It is enough for our present purpose to point out their practical import. The former aims to put into logical form the conviction that the world has an intelligent cause. This it does either by assuming that the world is contingent, or that it shows marks of intelligence. In the latter case this argument easily merges into the "argument of design," which may be stated, in syllogistic form, thus: The adaptation of means to ends is the function of intelligence; the world is a system in which we behold this adaptation; therefore the world has its cause and ground in intelligence.

Whatever may be thought of this syllogism as an "argument" or "proof," — and its logical value has been variously estimated, — it is certain that it expresses a strong and well-nigh universal conviction to which the contemplation of nature gives rise in the mind. My own opinion is that the belief in God has far deeper grounds than any "argument" or syllogism can furnish; that the conviction of a supreme Intelligence, which is evoked into clear consciousness by applying

the ideas of cause and design to the universe, does not follow and is not derived from the contemplation of nature, but is a primary conviction of the mind which it brings to all its observation of nature. This conviction is not attained by argument or inference from the facts of nature, but is possessed as an essential mental principle. The "argument" of design does not, therefore, conduct the mind beyond its own primary conviction. The contemplation of nature elicits this conviction into clear consciousness, and opens a sphere for its application; but it does not originate it, and cannot make it a more sure possession of the mind than it already is. The grounds for this view of the subject may be better presented in connection with the reasons for belief in God which lie within man himself.

In the last analysis, man himself is the only convincing proof of the being of God. "The descent into our own souls is the ascent to God." The world is perceived to exhibit harmony, order, and design, and to show evidence of being the product of intelligence, because man's own reason is so constituted that he is able to perceive and appreciate beauty and adaptation. We could not arrive at the conviction that the universe is grounded in reason if we were not ourselves rational beings. It is the power of reason to *interpret* the universe which gives rise to the conviction that it must have had an intelligent cause, and that it is adapted to realize rational ends At this view of the matter, the Apostle Paul seems plainly to hint in the passage already quoted, where he says, that by means of the things that were made, God's eternal power and divinity are clearly perceived by the reason of man (Rom. i. 20).[1] It is not

[1] The Greek is: τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, κ. τ. λ.

the "things that were made" in and of themselves, but it is these as perceived and interpreted by the reason, that yield the assurance of the divine Existence. The reason brings to its contemplation of nature certain native convictions and principles. These are the light of all its seeing in the study of the world. We find causation in nature because causality is an inherent principle of our own mental life. We find purpose and adaptation in the world because we have first found them in ourselves. Our convictions respecting nature as a sphere of intelligence and design, when traced back, have their ground in the principles and laws of reason which we know directly only in ourselves. It is necessary, therefore, to ask in what way and on what grounds reason gives its testimony to the existence of God.

The question has been much debated, whether or not the existence of God can be *proved*. I hold that it *can be* proved in the sense that adequate grounds for it can be shown to exist. It cannot be proved in the sense in which a proposition in geometry is proved, that is, by a process of putting together several more elementary propositions which combine to demonstrate the one in question. The existence of God is the most secure of all certainties, because it is itself the basis and presupposition of all other truths. It would, therefore, be correct to say that, while the existence of God cannot be demonstrated, it can be proved that it must be *assumed*.

The testimony of reason to the existence of God can best be considered under two heads, (1) the testimony of the speculative or thinking powers, and (2) the tes-

timony of the moral reason or the conscience. Both these elements of our nature belong to reason, which is the total power of the mind to know; but they are here distinguished for convenience, both because they are commonly separated in thought, and because they do represent two different aspects of our rational life.

When, by reflection, we seek to trace to its primary source our conviction of the divine Existence, we discover that its deepest ground lies in the very nature of our own rational and moral being. It is not primarily the necessity of assuming a cause of the world, but the necessity of assuming an adequate cause *of ourselves*, that gives to the belief in God its great strength and persistence. Our own rational natures are without explanation except upon the assumption that the world, of which we are a part, originated and is grounded in reason. This conviction we may formulate as follows: We are derived and dependent beings; we possess in our very nature the principles and laws of reason — therefore, the cause of our existence must be a rational Being, and our reason must be a reflex of the reason of this Being. Our rational nature thus compels us to assume the existence of God.

In claiming that the idea of God is a necessary idea of reason, it is important to guard the statement from misconception. It is not meant that the full Christian conception of God is a native possession of reason. This more complete idea is complex, and has many roots. Nor is it meant that any idea of God at all must always be clearly present in the consciousness of every man. Such is not the fact. Since the truths of reason are not upon the surface, but in the depths

of the mind, only close and careful reflection can discover, analyze, and define them. The view which I maintain is, that, as upon condition of the experience of the relations of space and time, the ideas of space and time arise as necessary ideas in the mind; so on condition of the use of reason and the discovery of rational principles and laws, the idea of a supreme and universal Reason necessarily arises in the mind as the ground of reason in man and the presupposition of all knowledge and thought. The form in which this idea arises, the clearness with which it is apprehended, and the influence which it exerts upon conduct and character, depend upon the degree of development to which men have attained, and upon their capacity for apprehending the deeper meaning of this idea.

The process of reflection which I have just described is not the *cause* of our belief in God; nor is it, ordinarily, its immediate *occasion.* The belief arises, as we have seen, spontaneously in connection with the impression made upon the mind by the order and beauty of the world, and in connection with those natural feelings of dependence and obligation which are the offspring of man's religious nature. Reflection simply discovers the deeper grounds of the belief in question by exploring the contents of man's own rational and moral nature. It is when reason, by reflection, perceives its own ideas, principles, and laws to be universal, that it finds itself compelled to assume an adequate cause for itself; that is, a supreme Reason, in which it has its origin and ground. Thus the reason of man, reflecting upon itself, is compelled to assume the existence of the absolute Reason; that is, the existence of God.

If the view here stated be correct, it will be evident why the existence of God cannot, in the strict sense of the word, be demonstrated. That cannot be proved by reasoning which is the very ground and presupposition of all reasoning and of reason itself. Reason can no more prove the existence of God than it can prove its own existence, or the existence of the world. That a personal God exists is *the* first truth of reason, because it is the most fundamental element of human knowledge; it is the condition and guaranty of all certainty and of all thought. The mind cannot rationally conceive of any explanation of man's personality except that which refers it to a personal intelligence as its source. This conviction, therefore, has all the marks of first truths, — necessity, universality, and self-evidence. To deny the supremacy of reason in the universe, that is, to deny the existence of a personal God, is logically to deny the grounds of all certain truth, and thus to involve the mind in contradiction and absurdity.

It is not a valid objection to the belief under consideration that many never see it as necessary. Many have never arrived at the conscious acceptance of the truths most generally held to be necessary and universal. These truths are not "universal" in the sense of being universally perceived and acknowledged. They are thus perceived and acknowledged only when clear and rational reflection discovers them. They are, however, universally — though often unconsciously — present in reason, which would not be reason without them. Many men, the great majority perhaps, have never clearly apprehended the principle of causality or that of design, or those fundamental distinctions in morals which we

justly regard as first truths. They belong to the very nature of mind; but how little self-knowledge the mind often has! This consideration applies with special force to the belief in God, which, just *because* it is the deepest certainty of all knowledge and thought, is the last to be discovered as such in the process of reflection. The existence of God is, therefore, a universal truth of reason in the sense that it is tacitly, that is, logically, assumed in all rational processes; that the capacity for its development is universal in reason, and that as the necessary basis of the universal laws and principles of thought, morality, and religion, it cannot even be denied without being logically assumed. This, then, is our conclusion in regard to the universality of the conviction that God exists; that, whenever the capacities of reason are unfolded, and the processes of knowledge analyzed in their underlying assumptions, the mind is led to the conviction that the world must have originated in a rational Being, in whom all its order and harmony, and especially the laws of thought and methods of knowledge, have their basis.

The considerations which have been advanced serve to show what is the real value of the theistic "arguments." To two of these — the argument from causality and that from design — we have already alluded, and have seen that they arise from man's contemplation of the outer world. The other two historic "proofs" of the divine Existence are drawn from the study of man's self-consciousness. One of these — the so-called "ontological argument" — proceeds from certain ideas of the reason, regarded as "necessary," and concludes to the existence of a Being corresponding to those ideas;

the other — the "moral argument" — proceeds from those feelings of dependence and obligation which are natural to man, and from his native yearnings after God, and concludes that these presuppose a proper object.

To these arguments I attach great importance, not, however, as syllogisms or "proofs," in the strict sense, but as forms in which the invincible convictions of our rational and religious nature find expression. The effort to put these convictions into a logical form on the supposition that the conclusion "God exists" can be drawn out of premises more fundamental and elementary than this truth, can never succeed, because God is the necessary assumption of all truth, and, therefore, there is nothing more fundamental than the fact of his existence from which the mind can start. His being is actually the "bottom fact" of all thought and all argument. All our most fundamental ideas assume and presuppose him as their basis; all our certainties and our mental processes rest upon him. He cannot, therefore, be found at the *end* of any process of reasoning, however short or simple, because he is already at its *beginning*. There is no starting-place for thought where he is not. When the eyes of the mind are opened, God is there. If he is not seen, it is not because he is not present, but because the eyes have not sufficient clearness and strength of vision to see him. All our "arguments" on the subject are really only forms of thought in which we set forth, in as clear light as possible, the native certainty, the necessary assumption of the mind, and show on what conditions of experience and reflection this certainty asserts itself in consciousness.

I have dwelt at some length upon the way in which the mind, the speculative reason, finds its way to its own deepest truth and certainty, — the conviction of the existence of God. Let me now, more briefly, explain what is the gist of the so-called moral argument.

This argument consists in the formulation of those facts of man's moral and religious nature which, in reality, are most effective in arousing and sustaining the belief in God. In the consciousness of most persons God is a religious rather than a speculative necessity. They do not reflect with sufficient clearness on the nature and assumptions of knowledge to discover that God is a necessity for thought. The soul finds itself under moral law which seems to be supreme and universal, and which it naturally refers to some supernatural source. Religious feelings and instincts are strong in the human breast. The heart does not easily rest in the view that man is a mere product of nature, and that this changing and perishing world is all that is in store for him. Our nature persists in believing in God, and in a spiritual world of abiding realities. If it be urged that this is but an example of the way in which men commonly believe what they want to believe, or feel like believing, I reply that it is, at least, significant that this belief does meet and satisfy a persistent demand of our nature. It will always be hard to convince mankind that there is no reality corresponding to the instincts and feelings of the moral and religious nature. As God cannot be proved by argument to those who demand demonstration, so can he not be disproved to those

who are willing to listen to the logic of their own hearts.[1]

It thus appears that the several "arguments" for the being of God are really efforts to describe the different aspects of God's self-revelation. We could not know God if he did not reveal himself to us. We could never by searching find him out. When we thoughtfully contemplate the world of which we are a part — whether it be the world without us or the world within — the conviction of his existence forces itself upon us. The world is an enigma; God is its solution. No other solution is reasonable or possible. Order, law, beauty, mind, conscience, will, — these all point unmistakably to reason as the cause and ground of the world. These most significant facts of our physical and moral system can find no explanation except in the existence of God.[2]

God has thus — as the Apostle Paul says — made himself manifest to the minds of men. This he has done by revealing his wisdom and power in his works, and by implanting in the human spirit those instincts and convictions which, when not stifled or perverted, bear perpetual testimony to the supremacy over us of a moral Lawgiver whose vicegerent is conscience. We thus see God because he has revealed himself. We

[1] Wer Gott nicht fühlt in sich und allen Lebenskreisen,
Dem werdet ihr nicht ihn beweisen mit Beweisen.

RÜCKERT.

[2] Why do I believe in God? I give one great reason — two great reasons which are really but one great reason — why I believe in God. I believe in God with all my soul, because this world is inexplicable without him and explicable with him, and because Jesus Christ believed in him; and it was Jesus Christ that showed me that this world demanded God and was inexplicable without him; that made certain every suspicion and dream that I had had before, and Jesus Christ believed in him. — PHILLIPS BROOKS.

hear his voice because he has spoken to us in nature and in the secret chambers of our own hearts. Look where we will, he is there, disclosed to our inner vision in some aspect of his infinite being. The universe is a vast cathedral through whose many windows our souls discern God. In any single view we see, perhaps, but one of his glorious attributes. Through one window of this temple we see God as Creator, through another as the supreme Reason, through another as the moral Governor; but through each we see God; through each we discern our Father's face, and discover that we are in our Father's house.

What, now, is the relation of this "natural" revelation of God, this disclosure of God to all men, to Christian revelation? We are accustomed to say, and rightly, that Christ revealed God to men. We have already observed, however, that our Saviour always assumed, and never sought to prove, the existence of God, and always assumed that men believed in his existence. He did not, therefore, come to earth to teach men that there *is* a God. He came — so far as this aspect of his work is concerned — to give to men a full and adequate disclosure of the character of God, to elevate and purify their conceptions of God, and to show them in his own life and spirit how God felt and thought toward them. In the language of the Apostle John, Jesus came to "interpret" God to men.[1] The basis, however, of this fuller revelation which Christ makes, is the universal self-revelation of God in his world. Nor are these two revelations to be conceived of as merely related to each other by position. They are organically and essentially

1 Ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. John i. 18.

connected. From the Christian point of view we must regard all divine revelation as Christian, in the sense that it is mediated through Christ who is the organ of God's self-communication. We are thus led to regard the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ as the crown of all the divine self-disclosures, and to contemplate nature and the life of man, not as standing in violent contrast to all that we find in the gospel, but as the spheres in which God has ever been revealing himself invisibly through Christ, and in which he has been fore-shadowing, even if dimly, his consummate revelation in the person and work of Jesus our Lord. We are thus able to discern — even though we can but imperfectly trace its outline — what a distinguished scholar has called "the gospel of creation." [1]

It seems to me to be right and important to magnify the significance of Christ and his work, and to make them comprehend everything which they can be seen legitimately to include. If the work of redemption through Christ is the great purpose of God that runs through the ages; if the completion of this work is the goal of human history — then surely there can be no presumption in claiming that nature itself is framed and fitted with reference to this great end, and that all human life and history are penetrated by divine influences, which are operating in the effort to secure the same grand result that the historic mission of our Saviour contemplates. There may well be something more than poetic fancy in Paul's conception of the intense and eager interest of nature in the process of man's salvation (Rom. viii. 19–22). The Christian man is enti-

[1] See Bishop Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 286, *sq.*

tled to believe that this world and "the fulness thereof" is ministrant to God's redeeming love to man. "All things" are his who belongs to Christ; among them "the world" and life (1 Cor. iii. 21–23).

That God has filled the world with his presence, that he perpetually speaks to man in the beauties and glories of nature, and in the still, small voice of conscience, is a fundamental truth of the Christian religion. Man's whole nature, when he is true to it, cries out for God, and finds no repose till it rests secure in the conviction of his existence. To bring man to the full fruitage of this conviction, to unfold to him its full content and significance, and to develop in him the life which corresponds to it, is certainly one of the principal aims of the Christian religion.

CHAPTER IV

REVELATION AND THE BIBLE

If there is a personal God, and if we are akin to him, it is reasonable to believe that he should speak to us. The great question for philosophy and theology is that which exists between Theism and Pantheism, — is God personal? The latter system, in its various forms, so identifies God with the world as to shut out the possibility of his free, conscious action, and, therefore, the possibility of revelation. God comes to consciousness only in man, who is, therefore, the highest expression of the divine. There can thus be no revelation, unless the voice of man's own nature, speaking within him, be called revelation.

The theistic conception, on the other hand, is that God is independent of the world. He is a self-conscious and self-determining Being upon whose will and power the world is dependent. He thus transcends nature; and although natural processes and laws are modes of his operation, they are not the necessary and only methods of his action. He is everywhere in his world, but he remains supreme over it.

Of this conception, revelation is a natural corollary. Nor need revelation be limited to those general disclosures of God in nature and conscience which we have been considering. That there should be unique and

special manifestations of God to men is perfectly consonant with theistic philosophy. The theist cannot deny the possibility of miracles, that is, acts of divine power outside the observed order of nature. From his standpoint, the only question is, whether the evidence of their actual occurrence is sufficient. Nor would miracles be, in his view, contrary to nature. They are simply above or outside nature's ordinary course, so far as we know it. They are probably according to nature, that is, according to some higher law than those which we observe in nature, or according to higher applications of observed laws than those which we know. At any rate, if God is personal, free, and supreme over the world, his action cannot be restricted to the natural processes which we observe. If natural law is a method of God's free action, he cannot himself be limited and fettered by its processes, since they are dependent upon his own determination.

It is a fundamental assumption of the Christian religion, that God has made a special revelation of himself to man, over and above that which he has made in nature and in the constitution of the soul. Of this revelation the Bible is a product and record. It was a great historic process, extending through many centuries. Divine Providence made the Jewish people the principal vehicle of this revelation. The reasons for this choice we cannot fully discover, but we may well suppose that by their position and native qualities the Jews were especially fitted to become the bearers and preservers of religious truth.

The earliest stages of this revelation we can but dimly trace in the remote antiquity of an almost pre-

historic age. The beginnings of the race, the beginnings of sin, and the beginnings of revelation, are all shrouded in impenetrable mystery. The early chapters of Genesis present these subjects in a series of pictorial legends which are analogous in form to the legends of other Oriental peoples touching the same themes. These traditions contain certain great religious truths which are consonant with the Jewish religion, under whose shaping influence they were preserved from age to age, and consonant with the teaching of Christianity. Among these conceptions we find the idea that God from the beginning manifested himself to man, whom he had made in his own image. The freedom and responsibility of man, who was able to live in fellowship with God, or to forfeit that fellowship by sin, together with the justice and the graciousness of God in his treatment of man, are ideas which distinguish these traditions, and which are fundamental in the whole biblical conception of religion.

It must be candidly admitted that great obscurity overspreads the methods of divine revelation in Jewish history. This should not be thought strange. The history of the Jews is the history of an ancient Oriental people whose literature — of which the Old Testament is a part — gives rise to many perplexing literary and archæological problems. The process of divine revelation which the Old Testament books describe as continually going forward, may best be studied at the points at which its method and meaning become clearest. To my mind, the most significant phenomenon in Jewish religious history is prophecy. Nothing else so well illustrates and justifies the idea that the Jewish people

were the vehicle of a unique divine revelation. Prophecy discovers to us the deeper meaning of Jewish history, and portrays the divinely appointed destiny which the nation was to fulfil among the peoples of the world.

Hebrew prophecy has its central point of significance in the great conception that the Jewish religious system was simply a means of preparing for a greater dispensation — the era of the Messiah. Judaism, in its highest moments of foresight and inspiration, is conscious of its own temporary and preparatory character. The cry of the Hebrew prophet is, "Prepare for something new; expect a larger revelation of God." To me, one of the most impressive evidences of a divine factor in Jewish history is found in this profound consciousness in the heart of the nation that its glory was to be that of ushering in the surpassing glory of another system which should fulfil, and thus supplant it. It is remarkable that a religion should prophesy its own abrogation. Prophecy, therefore, supplies the most convincing evidence of God's revealing plan and purpose in Jewish history. It is during the great prophetic period that the stream of divine revelation runs clearest; and, as we contemplate it there, we are encouraged to believe that it is really the same current which we elsewhere observe in places where its waters have been darkened by drawing into them more of the soil of human ignorance and misconception through which they have passed.

The significance of Hebrew prophecy and of the typology of the Old Testament is often viewed quite too narrowly. Prophecy is much more than a series of specific predictions for which we are to seek corresponding events in the life of Jesus, or in Christian

history. The typology of Judaism is something more than a series of symbolic objects and acts. The whole Old Testament history, the whole religious life of the nation, was prophetic. The Jewish people were "an incarnate hope." Their religious history was dominated by a great ideal. Their golden age was always in the future, not in the past. The prophetic significance of Judaism is to be found, primarily, in the great conceptions of the Messiah and of his kingdom, which swayed the heart of the nation. The words of Jeremiah sound the keynote of Israel's history: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers" (Jer. xxxi. 31, 32); and the New Testament, quoting this passage as expressing the deepest meaning of Judaism, takes up the refrain: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away" (Heb. viii. 13).

Such, in briefest outline, is the significance of Israel's history. When the fullest allowance is made for all the difficulties and obscurities which surround its beginnings and the earlier stages of its development, its main features stand out in clear relief, bearing the marks of a divine peculiarity. The Jews are, in a special sense, the people of revelation. "The (Messianic) salvation is from the Jews."[1] A special purpose of God runs through their history. They are a chosen instrument of Providence in preparing the way for Christianity, the universal religion. This conviction is strongly ex-

[1] Ἡ σωτηρία ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐστίν. John iv. 22.

pressed by one of the greatest modern students of their history, Heinrich Ewald, who says, "The history of this ancient people is in reality the history of the growth of true religion, rising through all stages to perfection, pressing on through all conflicts to the highest victory, and finally revealing itself in full glory and power, in order to spread irresistibly from this centre, never again to be lost, but to become the eternal possession and blessing of all nations." [1]

But the revelation whose salient features we are describing culminates in Christ. He is the central figure in the whole providential history which the Bible records, and all its parts are to be read in the light of his life and person. To him the religious hopes of Israel looked forward, and in him centred all the rays of divine light and truth which in all the ages God had been sending down into the life of mankind. It is Christ who, above all, gives to the Bible its unique character, its divine and permanent singularity. The Bible is differenced from all other literatures because Christ, its all-important personality, is differenced from other men. What makes biblical literature, and the history which it traces, powerful and precious for the Christian heart is mainly this, that it enshrines Christ, its chief treasure, who is the explanation of it all, and the divine secret of its power. There are many forms and methods of divine revelation, but the highest and most perfect form is that which we behold in Christ. As if God has exhausted all other possibilities of revelation, he at last makes a *personal* revelation. He comes to men in a perfect life, full of humanity, full of divin-

[1] *History of Israel*, i. 5.

ity, which is able at once to reveal God to man, and to reveal man to himself. Thus revelation is, in its highest form, personal. Revelation by miracle, by commandment, by prediction, are all secondary and subordinate to revelation through a personality which both interprets God to man and discloses to man his own true and possible sonship to God.

We must reserve to a later stage of our studies the effort to estimate the significance for thought and life of the personality of Christ. It is sufficient for our present purpose to point out the central place which he holds in that course of divine revelation which the Bible records and reflects. It has long seemed to me that this conception of Christ's relation to the Bible gives the most practical and helpful view of the nature and value of the book. Amid all the controversies about the Bible, and the attacks upon it, the Christian heart may rest secure in this conviction that the unique character and value of the Bible are as secure as are the unique character and significance of the person of Jesus Christ. The Bible may best be regarded as a group of books which have grown up around Christ, standing, some in a more, some in a less, direct relation to him. Speaking generally, the Old Testament is prophetically, and more distantly, related to his historic appearance; the New Testament deals almost entirely with that appearance and its significance. Looking at the Old Testament alone, we perceive that the ritual system, which is the main subject of the Pentateuch, embodies in symbolic form certain truths concerning sin, guilt, and the divine grace and forgiveness, which come to their fullest revelation in the

person and work of Christ. The prophetic writings are even more directly related to Christ, because, while they contain much that concerns their own time, their great burden is the hope of a coming Deliverer. In so far as the historical books of the Old Testament trace the career of the Jewish people, in whose life and history God was preparing the way for the Redeemer's coming, they, too, have a Messianic import, and make their contribution to our understanding of the "increasing purpose" which culminated in the incarnation. There still remain the Psalms and the so-called "wisdom-books," such as Job and Proverbs. The relation of the former to Christ is partly seen in their prophetic Messianic contents, partly in their reflection of the deep piety of the noblest spirits in Israel, which formed the fruitful soil in which the seed of the gospel was to be planted. The wisdom-books are unquestionably more remote from the central figure of revelation; yet they, too, by their representations of the struggles of the mind, during the earlier stages of revelation, after divine light and truth, add something to our knowledge of that movement of thought and that course of events in Israel's history, both of which culminate in Christ, "the wisdom of God and the power of God."

It is obvious to every reader that the various books of the New Testament — Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse — concern themselves chiefly with the person of Christ, and the significance of his appearance in history. These books are the original documents — so far as these have been preserved to us — which relate to the life and work of Jesus. "The New Testament," says Rothe, "is the photograph which

the historical Christ mirrored directly upon the consciousness of those who surrounded him." How obvious it is, then, that the significance and value of the books which compose it must be altogether unique. They are the primary source of our knowledge concerning Christ. To ascertain what the Christian religion is, in its spirit and in its great central truths, we must go to the New Testament. This group of books contains what we want to know and need to know concerning Christ. No other books do, except by derivation from these. Here are four sketches, at once similar in the total picture which they give, and different in viewpoint and color, of his person, teaching, and deeds. There is one book — the Acts — which narrates the early efforts and successes of his first disciples in teaching his doctrines and in organizing those who adopted them into societies for their preservation and further propagation. Here are writings by his apostles, men who stood closest to his person, and who had imbibed his teaching and spirit. These writings are mainly in the form of letters, and were evidently composed without thought, on the part of their authors, of their permanent preservation. But they are not, on this account, of less importance and value. They include epistles by Peter and John, and by James, believed by some to have been one of the twelve, by others a brother of Jesus. The New Testament prominently includes writings by certain companions of the apostles, who, to make no further claim, must have had the best of advantages for knowing the facts of our Lord's life, and the generally received import of his work. The most important example under this head

is Paul, who always claimed to be an apostle by a special divine call, though not one of the original twelve. He was, however, acquainted with some of the primitive apostles, and not long after his conversion had spent two weeks in company with Peter (Gal. i. 18).

The view which I wish to urge is, that these undeniable historical facts give unique significance and value to our New Testament books. In the New Testament history we are treading on ground which has been hallowed by the footsteps of the Son of God. Is not this fact sufficient to place those books for all time in a peerless position among the literatures of the world?

It is necessary to say something at this point on the much disputed subject of the inspiration of the biblical books. This question relates to the kind and degree of divine influence which was exerted upon the biblical authors in the composition of their various writings. Were they the passive instruments of the divine Spirit, mere amanuenses or "sacred penmen," so that God himself may be said to be the author of the Bible? If, on the contrary, they retained their individuality in writing, what were the limits which were set upon their liberty in expressing religious ideas or in writing history? Did God secure through them the use of certain words, that is, was their inspiration verbal? Or did he only secure the presentation, in their own freely chosen forms of thought and speech, of certain facts or truths; that is, was their inspiration dynamic or conceptual? Were all the biblical writers equally inspired? If not, how are the degrees of their inspiration to be dis-

tinguished? Were the men of the Bible differently inspired for purposes of writing than for purposes of teaching and leadership? Did their inspiration guarantee infallibility in their statements and teachings? and if so, does this infallibility concern only religious truth, or does it extend to their statements and teachings upon every subject upon which they touch? Such are some of the problems with which many theologians in our time are grappling, and over which many thoughtful Christians are anxious and perplexed.

I venture the opinion that theologians, in their efforts to defend the Bible, have commonly given to these questions a far greater prominence and importance than legitimately belong to them. The great question for the apologist is not the question of inspiration, but the question of revelation. In comparison with the former, this latter question is far more wide-reaching and fundamental. If the reality of revelation can be defended and maintained, it is comparatively unimportant to define the kind or degree of superintendence which God has exercised over the composition of those books which are its record and product. Inspiration as related to the biblical books is, at most, only an item in the process of preserving the history of revelation. If it is possible to define its nature and limits, it is very desirable to do so; but it is far less important than it is to be able to show that the historical process which the Bible enables us to trace is such as to justify the claim that it involves a unique revelation of God.

Moreover, the Bible cannot be successfully defended by arguing its inspiration. The Bible's primary claim for itself is not the claim of inspiration, but the claim

of historicity. If the substantial historical trustworthiness of the Bible can be maintained, it is not greatly in need of any further defence. If that trustworthiness cannot be maintained, much less can the defence of its inspiration prove successful. The inspiration of the Bible — in whatever sense it is asserted — must be upheld upon the basis of its historicity. To seek to defend the historical trustworthiness of the Bible on the basis of some doctrine of its inspiration, is to try to make a pyramid stand on its apex. The history of theology supplies no more conspicuous a case of misplaced emphasis than is seen in the effort to defend the Bible by maintaining some theory of its inspiration. If the history which it records does not justify the claim that it enshrines a unique revelation of God, it will be in vain to support that claim by asserting that God superintended the writing of its books.

The doctrine of inspiration must always, in the nature of the case, have the character and limitations of a theory. The historical facts which the Bible records are attested in all the ways in which other facts are attested. In starting from these in the maintenance of the reality of divine revelation, we are on solid ground. We hold, for example, that the Gospels can stand as history, and that the facts of Christ's person and work require the supposition of his unique character and divine mission. But what if we must prove the inspiration of the Gospels before we can maintain the facts which they record? How shall we do it? Their authors do not assert that they were divinely helped to compose them. We shall end, on this procedure, by pivoting our history upon a theory, instead of finding a

secure historical basis for our estimate of the permanent religious value of the writings in question.

Christianity is an historical religion ; that is, a religion of facts, — a religion that has entered the world, and spread itself among men by a long series of historical events. The Bible contains, so far as we have any means of judging, the most important literature which grew up in connection with this great historic process of revelation. It is not itself the revelation ; it is rather a product of the revelation. It is a partial but sufficient record of this signal movement of God in history, enabling us to perceive its most important stages and objects, and to interpret its chief significance. The Bible is, therefore, a vehicle of paramount importance for communicating to us a knowledge of that great and special process of divine revelation which culminated in Christ. Whatever theory be held as to the inspiration of its *books*, the Bible must ever hold an absolutely unique place in the thoughts and reverence of all who accept the truth of the main essential *facts* which it records. The Bible will ever stand high above all other books for all in whose hearts Christ stands high above all other characters in history.

In endeavoring to form a just and intelligent opinion on the subject of inspiration, it is important to remember that a theory, in order to be tenable, must be built up by an induction of all the ascertainable facts which the Bible presents, and must, of course, accord with those facts. If it is clear, for example, that there are demonstrable inaccuracies and discrepancies in Scripture, then no theory which asserts a formal infallibility of the biblical books concerning all matters upon which

they touch, can be correct. If it be true, as matter of fact, that there is a marked advance in ethical and spiritual truth in the later biblical books as compared with the earlier, then no theory which affirms the equal inspiration of all the Scripture writers can be tenable. The science of biblical criticism compels us to test all theories by a careful examination of the facts in the case, so far as they can be ascertained. An *a priori* theory as to what the Bible is, or as to the way in which its books must have been composed, fares no better at the hands of biblical science than do *a priori* theories in other realms at the hands of other sciences with whose subject-matter they undertake to deal. Such theories always lay great stress upon the perilous consequences of their rejection. But to this mode of argument it is to be answered, first, that nothing is more perilous in matters of religious thought and opinion than conflict with well-ascertained facts; and, further, that theories are legitimately established, not by appeal to the fear of consequences, but by appeal to the grounds on which they can be shown to rest.[1]

For myself, I greatly distrust the success of all efforts to frame an adequate theory of inspiration. The ways of the Spirit are various and inscrutable, and do not yield themselves to human definition. The Bible shares in the effects of that mighty working of God in

[1] Some theologians begin with the *a priori* principle that the Bible must be absolutely inerrant, and boldly assert that this is the case, not only in matters which pertain to the great purpose, but in all matters whatsoever. But if the facts show that this was not the case, which honors God the most, to accept his method of making a Bible as the best, or to insist that he followed the method which we think best? . . . It seems a very good and pious thing to insist that the Bible is absolutely without error. But nothing is good or pious that is contrary to facts. — Stearns, *Present Day Theology*, p. 105.

revelation which gave it birth. But no description of the amount and method of the divine influence in its production can be given which will be applicable to all its parts and to all its writers. Who shall describe in one breath the inspiration of the author of Ecclesiastes and that of the Apostle John? What formula descriptive of inspiration would be equally applicable to Solomon's Song and to the Epistles of Paul? The effort to construct such formulas is, as I have already intimated, largely the result of a misplaced emphasis. The stress of our thought should be laid upon forming as clear and correct a conception as possible of the redemptive history in which God's revelation primarily consists. Inspiration pertains to the men who were, in various ways, the divinely chosen media of that revelation. It is best conceived of as the influence and leadership of God revealing himself in the actual history and life of men, rather than as a mere superintendence of the writing of books. Any person who has a fairly clear conception of revelation as an historical process, need have little trouble over this question of the inspiration of the biblical books. He rests assured that the great men of the Bible — men like Moses, Isaiah, John, and Paul — have been, next to the Son of man himself, the chief agents of divine Providence in acquainting the world with God.

It is not infrequently urged in favor of the theory of verbal inspiration, which declares the Bible to be perfect and infallible in all its parts, that it is the easiest to define and to entertain. If this statement be granted, it may be doubted whether the alleged advantage is a real one. The simplest and most easily conceivable

astronomy is that which described the sky as a solid floor, and the stars as holes through which the light beyond shone through. This theory is, indeed, easy, unless one happens to study the phenomena of the heavens. The theory of the verbal and equal inspiration of the biblical writers is no easier when the phenomena of the Bible are candidly investigated. It is true that the theory in question requires little discrimination; it is sweeping, wholesale, and, therefore, simple. Even if the making of distinctions — which it is often hard, sometimes impossible, satisfactorily to make — were one from which the candid Christian scholar could regard himself as absolved, the simplicity of this theory could not recommend it. In fact, it breaks down from sheer weight of simplicity; it is so much more simple than are the facts which it would explain.

It is common to suppose that the interests of biblical religion are at present especially imperilled by the decay of what are called "strict" or "high" theories of the inspiration of the biblical writings. It does not seem to me that this is the point at which our faith is threatened. The peril is that men should come to doubt the reality of revelation itself, should grow uncertain of God, and should degrade the person and work of Christ. Men will never fail in sufficient appreciation of the Bible so long as they believe in revelation and in Christ. If they doubt revelation and depreciate Christ, it is vain to talk to them of the inspiration of the Bible. If they accept the truth of revelation and the supreme significance of Christ, their conception of the Bible will take care of itself. Our estimate of Christ is absolutely primary in our religion. A man who be-

lieves that the Bible gives us a trustworthy historical picture of him, and of his significance, and who seeks to live according to that belief, holds what is most essential respecting the Bible, and may permit himself the largest liberty in the investigation of the various critical and historical questions which arise in connection with its study. He whose faith is pivoted on some theory of the Bible's inspiration, stands on precarious ground, especially if it be a theory which all investigation tends more and more to disprove. He whose faith is centred in Christ, and in the historical action of God in preparing for him and his work, stands on a secure, immovable foundation, since he rests in no theoretic wisdom of man, but in the power of God.[1]

If, in what I am here saying, I seem to underestimate the importance of a doctrine of inspiration, it is only because I would emphasize the relatively greater importance of the doctrine of revelation. The Bible is inspired in the sense that its authors were men who, in diverse ways and degrees, shared in that large enlightenment which was a great factor in the work of revelation. The literary product of this process of revelation bears traces of divine influence, uplift, and guidance, the same in kind as does the actual providential history which was, as it were, the channel of revelation. The Bible is sacred literature in the same sense in which

[1] All the New Testament is an earthen vessel containing a treasure of divine greatness and power. It is a fatal mistake to imagine that the vessel itself is the treasure. The treasure of the Gospels is the spirit of Christ. If the vessels are earthen, it is only that the treasure may the more surely be known to be of God. The workmanship of these pictures of Christ is not so perfect that there can be any doubt whence comes the superhuman beauty and glory of the face. — Prof. Frank C. Porter, in *The Congregationalist*, Sept. 20, 1894.

Jewish history and church history in the apostolic age are sacred history.

In summing up these suggestions, I should say that the conception of the inspiration of the Bible should be held in relation to its essential and spiritual contents, and not in relation to its form or letter. Inspiration does not terminate upon the production of formally infallible records, but upon the furnishing of men for the communication of religious truth. It is involved in this conception that inspiration is, in strict propriety, applicable only to men, and not to books. It is applicable to the latter only in a secondary and derivative sense. No doubt the enlightenment of the mind and the elevation of the spirit are reflected in what one writes, but this reflection is not restricted to the act of writing. Inspiration includes equipment for teaching, leadership, and other functions, as well as for the writing of books. It also follows that inspiration cannot be rigidly limited — except by arbitrary definition — to those who wrote some part of our canonical books. There is no reason to doubt that there were prophets as truly and fully inspired as were those whose writings we have, and that other apostles, who have not contributed to our canon, shared as richly in the promised gifts of the Spirit as did those whose epistles we possess.

Conceding and even urging, as I do, that no sufficient definition of God's action and influence in securing the composition of the Bible can be given, I venture to present the following statement as embodying a practical, working conception of the subject: Inspiration is a name for that guiding and enlightening influence of the divine Spirit upon the biblical writers, which enabled them,

in different degrees of fulness and in varying forms, to present in their writings, narratives, examples, and interpretations of the history and contents of the divine self-revelation, such as, when taken together and rightly interpreted, constitute an adequate and authoritative guide to religious faith and conduct.

CHAPTER V

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

We have seen that we can know something of God from that general revelation which he makes of his power, wisdom, and goodness in nature and in conscience. But we need to know more of him than we learn from this disclosure. Nothing is more important in religious thought and life than a true conception of the character of God. No idea is so powerful and wide-reaching in its effects as the idea which we cherish concerning him. The difference between the gross rites and absurd superstitions of heathenism and the highest forms of religious worship and service is, at bottom, a difference in the idea of God. There is nothing upon which our whole conception of the world and of life so much depends as upon the idea of the character of God which we cherish. Little as we may think of it, every day is bitter or hopeful, every duty commonplace or inspiring, every sacrifice irksome or joyous — in short, every day's work and experience full of low and selfish meanings, or of noble and divine meanings, according to the practical thought of God and of our relations to him which we are carrying about with us day by day. It will not seem true at first thought that our daily life has so deep a root; but the more we reflect upon it, the more evident, I believe, it will appear.

'In like manner the different religious opinions of men, and their different modes of worship, are chiefly accounted for by their different conceptions of the character of God.' It was, for example, a prevalent idea in the early church that God had a special satisfaction in the suffering of men. Hence, self-denial for its own sake and self-inflicted tortures were rigidly practised. All enjoyment was sin. Men wore garments of coarse hair, stood on pillars in all weathers, starved themselves, and practised flagellation, thinking they were doing God's service. Out of this idea grew the hermit and monastic life, and the vows of poverty and celibacy. In the same line are descended many of the rigors of our earlier Protestantism — tirades on harmless enjoyments, unwarmed and uninviting places of worship, and bald and monotonous forms of religious service.

Now, if we, unlike the ascetics of earlier ages, believe that God made this world for a happy home, and not for a gloomy prison; if we believe that he meant that our lives should be bright and cheerful, and that he gave us the capacity for enjoyment to use in all legitimate and harmless ways; if we believe that God would rather see us hopeful than despairing, and that no part of our nature is to be despised or tortured, but that all our faculties are to be developed harmoniously and subjected to the sceptre of reason and love — it is simply because we have entered into the possession and application of a different thought of God from that which was dominant in early and mediæval Christianity. The word *life* means to us what the word *God* means to us.

And the same is true of the religious opinions of men. The strifes of sect and the disputes of theological parties have been mainly due, in their last analysis, to different notions of God. The conflicting theological opinions of our own time are mainly traceable to this root. These controversies, however, are too near to permit us always to discern clearly their real basis and significance. But we discover the truth of the principle in question very clearly if we look into the past. Whenever in the history of the church we find ideas and practices which now seem to us to be gross exaggerations and perversions of the truth, we can commonly trace them to misconceptions of the divine nature. A modern theologian has justly said that "most, if not all, the errors in divinity have arisen from false or confused notions of the divine character."[1] If, then, the idea of God bears so vital a relation to all religious thought and life, how important it is that we should seek to attain the highest possible conception of his nature. To know all that we can learn about God is an imperative need of our religious life. There are many problems of theology which we should like to solve, whose solution we can await without detriment to our spiritual development, and without disaster to our religious faith. But we must be very sure of God, sure what kind of a Being he is in his feeling and disposition toward us, if our hearts are to rest in confidence and in peace. "The question of God's moral character is one which we cannot for a day leave unanswered. The sweetest sleep is embittered if we know not what is the nature of the God

[1] Stearns, *Present Day Theology*, p. 209.

who rules us. Death is a terror if we are ignorant of the God into whose presence we are to be ushered." [1]

For the fullest disclosure of the character of God we must turn to the teaching and life of Christ. We find that the word by which he was wont to speak of God was the term "Father." That word, therefore, may justly be regarded as expressing, better than any other, our Saviour's conception and revelation of the divine character. And this truth, that God is our Father, is the truth which, above all others, we need to know. The eager request of Philip: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John xiv. 8), was born of the deepest need and longing of the human heart. When a child is lost, its bitterest cry is for its father or mother. Childhood's natural sense of dependence, the filial yearning for parental care, is one of those divinely given traits of nature in which we must all become as little children if we would enter into the kingdom of God.

No revelation of God can suffice us except the revelation of him as Father. It is not enough for us to know that he created us, and fashioned this great system of which we are a part. We may go out at night under the soft light of the stars, and reflect on the great and wise Being who made and sustains this wonderful world of order and beauty; but what avails all this if he does not care for us; if he will in no way reach down to guide and help us; if he does not hear us when we speak to him?

Fatherhood is much more than creatorship. God's Fatherhood implies a native kinship, on our part, to

[1] Stearns, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

him; some likeness of our nature to his own which makes us capable of fellowship with him. There is no such relation of God to the physical world as is expressed by the term "fatherhood." Love is an essential constituent of this fatherhood, and God does not make the orders of creation beneath man the objects of his love. Fatherhood and love are terms which express relations between God and beings kindred in spirit with himself.

A question concerning which there is a wide practical difference among teachers of religion is the question whether God is the Father of all men, or only of those who are obedient to his will. The question is one in regard to which clear discrimination is necessary, since it is one which affects, in no small degree, the conception of the divine character. The question may be put from the other side, thus: "Are all men sons of God, or are only those such who are believing and obedient?" For answer recourse must be had to the teaching of Christ. We should both consult specific expressions which bear upon the question, and consider the general spirit of his life and teaching. The conclusion to which such an examination will lead may be correctly stated, I think, in this paradoxical form: God *is* the Father of all men, but men *become* sons of God. Let us consider each part of this apparently contradictory proposition.

That Jesus conceives of God as the Father of all men is evident from the way in which he so often speaks of God as "the Father," without any definition or limitation, and especially from that epitome of the gospel, the parable of the Prodigal Son, which depicts

the fatherly love of God in its tenderness and compassion for the disobedient and undeserving. The statement, then, that God is the Father of all men, means that God is always good and gracious; that he is always, if we may so speak, what he ought to be; that whatever men may be, he is always true to his own essential benevolence. Men are *ideally*, that is, according to the true divine idea of humanity, sons of God; but by reason of sin they are not *actually* what they are ideally and in possibility. We accordingly find that Jesus does not speak of sinful men as sons of God. The prodigal represents himself as no more worthy, by reason of his disobedience, to bear the name *son*. In the true moral sense of that term he has forfeited sonship. The natural relation to his father, and the father's gracious disposition and character, remain. The fatherhood is not impaired, although it is aggrieved and wounded; it is the sonship which is impaired, and needs to be restored. In other words, Jesus reserved the term *son* to express the true moral relation of man to God in obedience and love. Sonship meant for him something more than creaturehood. Hence he taught men to love even enemies, that they might be — as they would not otherwise — the sons of their Father who is in heaven (Matt. v. 44, 45); that is, that they might be like God in the spirit of their action. In like manner John teaches that men become sons of God by a spiritual renewal or transformation. "As many as received him [Christ], to them gave he the right to *become* children of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John i. 12). Here men are said to become, on certain conditions, children

of God — a statement which clearly implies that, in the sense in which the terms are used, they were not such before. To the same purport is the apostle's language in 1 John iii. 1, where he is addressing his fellow-Christians: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are."

It does not, however, follow, from what has been said, that there is no true sense in which all men may be spoken of as sons of God. In the special ethical sense in which Jesus was wont to use the term, all men are not children of God; they are such, however, in the sense that they are made in God's image, and that they are the objects of his care and love. Let us now observe the importance and bearing in religious thought of these discriminations.

On the one hand, the truth of God's universal Fatherhood must not be restricted. To do this would involve a limitation of the love and saving mercy of God. To such consequences this restriction has always led in theology. The doctrine that God from eternity chose out from the mass of mankind a certain definite number whom he would save, and consigned the rest to perdition, with its corollary that the work of Christ was intended to provide salvation only for this limited number, is an example of the consequences which flow from the limitation of God's fatherly love. On the other hand, the assertion of God's universal Fatherhood easily leads to what is, in one sense, its correlate, the universal sonship of all men to God. If, now, this statement is made and understood, not merely in the general sense in which it is true, but with the special

and higher meaning in the word *sonship* which Jesus attached to it, it follows that the impairment of man's normal relation to God by sin, and the necessity of his repentance and spiritual renewal, will be overlooked. Thus we see that, on the one side, the narrowness of many earlier forms of theological thought can be traced to a limitation of the divine Fatherhood; while, on the other, the laxness of much modern teaching is seen to spring from the affirmation of man's sonship to God in a sense in which Jesus never affirmed it — a sense in which he always made it dependent upon repentance, faith, and obedience.

The true procedure in dealing with the conceptions under review is to magnify to the utmost, on the one hand, the fatherly love and compassion of God. His benevolence is universal, unbounded. He loves all men, and wishes all to be saved, and has always done all that wisdom and love could do to secure this result. On the other hand, we must fully recognize the sinfulness and guilt of man. He is not naturally what he ought to be; he does not fill out the idea of true, ethical sonship of God. In actual fact, his sonship is not the perfect correlate to God's Fatherhood. We can, therefore, affirm it only in a qualified sense, and must accordingly emphasize the necessity of that spiritual renewal which the Bible calls the birth from above. These views of God's Fatherhood and of man's sonship are rightly adjusted by holding that God's mercy is conditioned, but never limited. He is always ready, and more than ready, to forgive; but, in the nature of the case, his forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance. His fatherly compassion is denied

to none; it is unlimited; but it can only establish harmony and fellowship where there exists, on the part of the creature, the reciprocal disposition of obedience and love. Thus the truth of our proposition appears, that God *is* the Father of all men. He is never actually anything less than what he is ideally; men, on the other hand, *become* sons of God by faith and obedience, because they are not, apart from moral renewal, what they ought to be. This is but to say that the restoration of the normal relation between man and God must be from man's side, since it is on his side alone that the fellowship is impaired.

There are two other statements respecting the character of God which are very fundamental in Christian teaching. One of these is, that God is righteous or holy; the other, that God is love. These conceptions we can best consider together, since, in our view, they are very essentially related.

We find that in the Old Testament the righteousness of God is more emphasized than his love, while in the New Testament the reverse is the case. This is what we should expect in view of the progressive character of revelation. The truth that God is love involves a more comprehensive and complete conception of his character than does the truth that he is righteous or holy. The doctrine of God's holiness, in the Old Testament, emphasizes the idea of his separateness from all impurity and wrong. His holiness is his moral exaltation. Looked at on its more positive side, it is the self-affirming, self-respecting quality of God's nature. It involves his repudiation of all sin as being contrary to his own perfect will and character. Righteousness

emphasizes the retributive element of God's being which leads him to condemn and punish sin. It is obvious that the idea of righteousness is absolutely fundamental in the Christian conception of God.

The word love, as a name for the moral character of God, suggests, at first thought, the qualities of mercy and compassion. These are the attributes which are the complement of righteousness. But love and righteousness must not be thought of as contrary or antithetic. "God *is* love," says the Apostle John (1 John iv. 8, 16). Love is a name for his moral nature, and not merely for one aspect of it. Love must therefore include the holiness as well as the benevolence of God. This truth can be justly emphasized by saying that God is holy love. Righteousness is the self-respect of love; benevolence is its self-communication in blessing. No conception of God's nature as love is adequate which does not contain both of these elements. Mere good nature, which should take no account of righteousness, would not be love. Mere naked justice, which should deal with men without forbearance or compassion, would be no adequate definition of the character of God as Christ reveals him. God is both just and good, and neither his justice nor his goodness must be emphasized to the neglect of the other. Both these elements must be combined in the conception of God as self-imparting holiness or as holy love.

These considerations respecting our conception of the character of God are of the first importance in religion and theology. The justice of God has often been made the fundamental attribute of his nature in such a sense as entirely to subordinate love. It has

been widely held, for example, that justice is an attribute which God must always exercise, while love is a quality which it is optional with him to exercise or not. It is said that God *must be* righteous, but that he *may be* benevolent and merciful, or not, as he chooses. According to this theology, God must punish sin. It would seem to follow that he cannot forgive it, and this theory admits that he cannot forgive it without first punishing it. This he does representatively in the penal sufferings which he lays upon his Son, Jesus Christ. It will be seen that this type of theological reasoning completely subordinates love to justice. Strict, absolute justice must be done, and mercy can have no place until it is done. The just penalty of the world's sin having been vicariously endured by Christ, it is possible for God to exercise that benevolence, which, however, he might have refrained from exercising without the impairment of his moral perfection.

It will thus be seen that this view really makes perfection of character to consist in strict justice alone. According to its premises, God might refrain from being merciful altogether and still be as perfect as he now is. Mercy cannot, therefore, be an essential quality in the character of God. The practical consequences in religious thought of this conception of the nature of God have been very marked. The whole view of salvation and of life must be strongly colored by such a theory. It easily leads to the idea that God is hard and cruel, that the salvation of some is due to an arbitrary choice, and that to others God has seen fit to deny his mercy. The preaching of an earlier time, which had for its leading themes divine sovereignty,

election, and reprobation, took its color largely from that conception of God's character of which we are speaking. The gloom and despair which this teaching often brought into the most earnest souls were products of the belief that God dealt with men in mere naked sovereignty, and that grace was no essential attribute of his nature, but a name for a mode of action which was dependent wholly upon his will.

It may well be doubted whether this doctrine did not logically shut out the possibility of salvation altogether. If justice is the one only essential and necessary attribute of God, what room is left for the prevalence over it of a secondary and optional quality? When it is answered that absolute justice was done to sin in the penal sufferings of Christ, the question at once arises, What quality in God could have prompted the substitution of Christ for us in punishment? It could not have sprung from justice; for justice would have counselled the punishment of guilty man himself, and not that of an innocent substitute. The only possible answer is that this provision looking toward man's salvation was due to the benevolence or mercy of God. But this answer makes mercy as fundamental in God as justice, since this *just* "plan of salvation" through Christ's death is ascribed to mercy as its motive. The theory in question begins by logically excluding God's mercy, and ends by ascribing its "just" work of atonement to mercy as its only possible source and spring. It tells us at the outset that God must be just, but need not be merciful. But if this proposition is a correct description of his nature, we should be led to suppose that absolute justice would be done in the exclusion of the guilty world from

salvation altogether. At this point, however, we are told that absolute justice has been done; that the world's sin has been punished vicariously in Christ; but when we ask, *why* this was done, the only answer is, Because God was merciful. In other words, the essential mercy of God, which is excluded by definition at the beginning, is afterwards admitted when an effort is made to describe his actual procedure in relation to sin. God's action, thus, does not conform to this definition of his character.

This brief sketch of a long-prevalent mode of theological thought and argument may serve to illustrate the practical consequences of a one-sided conception of the character of God. When, on the other hand, the mercy of God has been emphasized at the expense of his justice, an equally false view has resulted. The character of God has been reduced to easy-going good nature and he has been thought too good to punish sin. On this view of God the demands of righteousness and the restraints of law are relaxed, and the very foundations of morality are weakened. This conception easily leads those who entertain it to think lightly of sin. Its guilt and desert of punishment are denied, and sin is regarded as mere excusable weakness, mistake, or failure. The reaction in recent times from the harsh and arbitrary views of the older theology has carried many minds to an opposite extreme. Here, as so often, the true course is not to adopt either extreme, nor even to take a middle position between them, but to take a higher position than that assumed by either, and to combine the elements of truth upon which each insists. God is absolutely righteous. Justice and judgment are the

foundation of his throne. Righteousness is absolutely essential in his nature. Were he for a moment unrighteous, he would not be God. But God is also, in his very essence, good or benevolent. His mercy endureth forever. God cannot be imagined to cease for a moment from being benevolent and compassionate without an utter perversion of his nature. The holy displeasure of God against sin and its just punishment do not involve the cessation of his mercy. Neither in his action nor in his nature is God ever divided against himself.

From these illustrations the advantages of maintaining, in its integrity, the truth that God is love should be apparent. All moral perfections are fundamental and essential in God, and love is a name for moral completeness. God cannot be conceived as resigning or as suspending by an act of will the exercise of any moral perfection. He does not have to render his mercy quiescent that he may exercise justice, nor to surrender his justice that he may be merciful. He is both the righteous Ruler of the universe in whose being all principles of right and truth have their eternal seat, and the God of all grace, the Father of all tender mercies. We owe it to an undue narrowing of the idea of God's love, and to a one-sided emphasis of his justice, that many seem afraid that his holiness will be lost to us if we maintain in its fullest, largest meaning the truth that God is love; I say, the truth that God *is* love, not merely that God *may be* love; not merely that God *has* love; but that God *is* love; that the centre of this universe is a heart whose affections are ceaselessly poured forth upon the world which he has made.

When it is maintained that God is, in his very nature,

merciful and compassionate, it is not meant that he is so by any necessity which dwells outside of or above himself. The "necessity" is a purely moral necessity, springing out of his own perfect nature. The "necessity" that God should be benevolent is precisely the same as the "necessity" that he should be just. He must be both, since he must be himself. The freedom and excellence of mercy are no more sacrificed by making it essential in God's nature, than are the freedom and excellence of righteousness sacrificed by defining that attribute as fundamental in God. For God there is no necessity except that of conformity to his own perfection, but this necessity is the highest and the most inflexible that is conceivable. It is that absolute bondage to right-doing which is coincident with perfect freedom, and in which consists the consummation of personal excellence.

I believe that these considerations accord with the actual disclosure of the character of God in the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ, and with the demands of practical Christian thought and life. God is the Father and Friend of men, even of the most sinful men. He is always ready to bless and to forgive, where to do so is morally possible. It is according to his changeless nature to give, to serve, to sympathize. The gracious work of Christ for man's salvation was born of God's compassionate heart. His justice is not such a mere demand for *quid pro quo*, such a passion for quantitative payment and vengeance, that the exercise of mercy appears as a violation or suspension of it. It is compatible with forgiveness when, in the method of forgiveness, the ill desert of sin and God's

righteous displeasure against it, are revealed and vindicated.

The Christian heart demands a conception of God in which every essential element of goodness shall be recognized. No real quality of moral perfection must be denied to God, or be defined to be merely subordinate and secondary in his nature and optional as respects its exercise. We should deny to a man the highest Christian character who chose not to be merciful, or who should feel himself at liberty so to choose. The Christian conception of God must not be lower than the Christian conception of the highest manhood. Let us have no low idea of God. He is great. He is greater than our hearts and our thoughts; greater than the sum of all conceivable perfections which we ascribe to him. The perfection of our life can only consist in moral likeness to God. His bestowment of his love upon us has for its end to make us his children; that is, to bring us into sympathy and fellowship of life with himself. We can now easily see why Christianity teaches that love is the sum of all goodness. Since God is love, it follows that he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him (1 John iv. 16).

CHAPTER VI

THE TRINITY

In offering some remarks upon the doctrine of the Trinity, it is far from my purpose to undertake to elucidate the mystery which it involves. The inner nature of the Deity is an impenetrable secret, which the human mind cannot explore; and the Trinity is, in one aspect of it, a name for this unfathomable mystery. We, therefore, freely concede at the outset the difficulties and the mysteriousness of the subject. To these difficulties those who reject the doctrine naturally and urgently appeal. On the basis of them they declare it to be inconceivable and irrational. In regard to this claim I would say that the intellectual difficulties which beset a truth are not necessarily a bar to belief in it. Nor is the credible always limited to the conceivable. The primary question respecting the Trinity is, whether there are adequate grounds for belief in it. If there are, the mystery of it should not deter the mind from its acceptance.

The essence of the doctrine of the Trinity is, that God exists in a threefold mode of being, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of these is, in the strict sense, divine, that is, partakes of the nature of Deity. All three of them together constitute the one only God. There is a unity of nature or substance in God, and

there is, at the same time, a threefoldness or trinality which represents eternal distinctions in the divine essence. God is one and God is three, but not, of course, in the same sense. He is one in substance or essence; but there exists within this one essence three persons or subsistences, which are revealed to us under the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

There are many notions of God's nature which stand in contrast to the Trinitarian idea. One of these is the Unitarian doctrine. On this view, God is one and solitary; he is in no sense three. There is no room, according to this conception, for interrelations or intercommunion within the nature of the divine Being. God is, apart from creation, absolutely solitary. Another contrasted view is the pantheistic. On this view, God is at once the One and the All. The universe itself is taken up and lost in God; or, stating the idea from its other side, God is identified with the universe and lost in it. This mode of thought almost necessarily surrenders the personality of God. Still another view is the polytheistic, which admits the existence of many gods, and assigns to them various limitations of nature and function. The doctrine of the Trinity stands in contrast with the Unitarian view in affirming a certain manifoldness of life, an interplay and interrelation within the nature of God, as opposed to the idea of solitary existence. It differs from pantheism in distinguishing God from the world which he creates, and by ascribing to his nature all fulness of being and of fellowship, apart from creation. From polytheism the Trinitarian doctrine differs in affirming that the unity of the divine nature underlies the personal distinctions which it recognizes.

It may, I think, be fairly assumed that since this doctrine, with all its difficulties, has been held for many centuries by the great majority of the most thoughtful and learned men of the Christian world, there must be some good reasons for its acceptance. A doctrine so mysterious and so difficult to define and defend could hardly have arisen and taken so strong a hold upon the Christian world, unless there had been some important facts of revelation which supported and required it. What these facts were may be, in part, briefly stated.

The great fact which occasioned the development of the doctrine was the incarnation. The claims which Christ made for himself, and the claims which the New Testament writers make for him, compel the admission of his eternal pre-existence and his divine nature. The present difference among scholars in regard to this subject is not so much a difference respecting what the New Testament says and means, as a difference in respect to the trustworthiness and value of its testimony. That our Gospels represent Jesus as claiming for himself pre-temporal existence, and participation in the divine nature, cannot, without great exegetical arbitrariness, be denied, and is commonly admitted at present by competent scholars of all schools. Before the world was, he existed in glory at the Father's side (John xvii. 5); and before Abraham was born, he is (John viii. 58). John affirms that the Logos, the pre-existent Christ, was God (John i. 1); and Paul speaks of him as existing, previous to his incarnation, in the form of God, and, by implication, refers to his equality with God (Phil. ii. 6). There is no escape from the conclu-

sion that the New Testament teaches the essential deity of Christ. Those who reject the doctrine, therefore, — if they give any heed to New Testament teaching at all, — are bound to show that its testimony on this subject is inadequate or untrustworthy. With the methods of argument by which this effort is commonly made, we are not now concerned. If Christ is divine, and yet, at the same time, can speak of the Father in distinction from himself, these two facts, taken together, give us both the idea of the unity and that of the distinction between him and God.

But a further fact meets us. Christ speaks of the Holy Spirit as distinct both from the Father and from himself, and yet ascribes to him divine prerogatives and powers. He is "another Advocate," distinct from Christ (John xiv. 16). He bears witness of Christ (John xv. 26); and his coming to the disciples is conditioned upon the Saviour's departure (John xvi. 7). Personal pronouns are used in referring to the Spirit, and personal activities are constantly ascribed to him. If the deity of the Spirit is not explicitly asserted, it is certainly implied in the whole description of his work and significance. If the deity of Christ be admitted, it can hardly be doubted that his teaching concerning the function of the Spirit in redemption, and concerning the Spirit's relation to his own person and to the Father, clearly implies the conception of his essential deity. This conclusion is confirmed by those passages in the New Testament where we find an approach to the Trinitarian formula. I refer to the words in the "great commission:" "baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"

(Matt. xxviii. 19), and to the apostolic benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all" (2 Cor. xiii. 14). Let it not be supposed that the passages to which I have been referring represent the whole scriptural evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity. They do, however, furnish the principal data which have given rise to Trinitarian doctrine and belief.

It is true, as a matter of fact, that for most persons who accept the trustworthiness and truthfulness of the New Testament, the evidence for the Trinitarian view of the divine nature is sufficient. This evidence, in the nature of the case, will not appeal to those who hold that the New Testament is not sufficiently historical to yield us the actual teaching of Jesus on such subjects. Nor will it have force for those who distrust the truthfulness of Jesus' own self-testimony. But if one believes that what he claimed and asserted is true, and that the New Testament fairly represents his claims, no one can charge him with unreasonableness in holding that these claims and statements justify belief in the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrines of the deity of Christ, and of the Trinity, cannot be denied except upon grounds which involve the surrender of the historicity and truthfulness of the New Testament.

Some persons who have acknowledged that the teaching of Jesus and of the apostles involved the doctrine of the equal divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have avoided the acceptance of the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity by holding that these three terms designate three phases or modes of the divine self-manifestation, and not essential and eternal distinc-

tions in the nature of God. This is the so-called Sabellian doctrine. It holds to a Trinity of revelation only, a moral as opposed to an immanent Trinity. It is, however, an unsatisfactory explanation of the facts with which it seeks to deal. It does not accord with the New Testament teaching respecting the eternal pre-existence of the Son of God in a form of being distinct from the Father. John teaches that the pre-existent Christ was in the beginning with God, and was God (John i. 1). By this language, which he here chooses with great care, he expresses the view that the pre-existent Son was properly divine, and yet was distinguished from God the Father. To the same effect is the claim of the Son to absolute existence where he says: "Before Abraham was born, I am" (John viii. 58). Here Christ's absolute existence is expressed in the words "I am," in contrast to Abraham's coming into being.[1] Moreover, if God is *revealed* as a Trinity, it is reasonable to suppose that he *exists* as such. He is *revealed* as he *is*. The doctrine of the moral Trinity represents a natural effort to escape from the difficulties which beset the commonly received view, but is inadequate to explain the teaching of Christ and of the New Testament generally.

I have already alluded to the objection so often made to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it is inconceivable,

[1] The Greek text of these passages is: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. Πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί. The student of the original text will note that the Logos is called *θεός*; that is, God generically considered, but distinguished from *ὁ θεός*; that is, the Father specifically considered. For a fuller discussion of this whole subject in its exegetical and theological aspects, I refer the reader to my work on *The Johannine Theology*, chaps. iv. and v.

and therefore irrational. It is necessary to weigh this objection more carefully. If, when it is said that the Trinity is inconceivable, it is meant that the mind can form no mental picture of it, the statement is quite true. The truth of the Trinity transcends the reach and power of the imagination. But so also do thousands of truths for which the evidence is commonly deemed to be overwhelming, and which are therefore generally accepted among men. We cannot imagine, that is, form any definite mental concept, of the human soul. The interrelation and interaction of the soul and the body are absolutely inconceivable. We cannot picture to ourselves the various faculties or powers of our own mysterious personalities. Yet we recognize this complexity of our personality, this fulness and interplay of powers in our mental structure, as an unquestionable fact. Our powerlessness to conceive of these things does not overbear the testimony in their behalf. This testimony we find in our own consciousness and experience; and it is quite irresistible, despite the inability of the imagination to deal with the truths of which it assures us. We also accept many inconceivable facts, for which the evidence is found outside our own mental life. Such are many of the truths of science. The nature and action of natural forces, and especially the marvellous phenomena of psychical action — such as the influence of mind over body, and of one mind upon another — are utterly beyond the power of the imagination to construe. The truth is, that when we come to reflect upon the matter, we find that the province of the imagination is very restricted. It can never be made, in any sphere of

knowledge, the measure of our convictions, or the final test of truth. That we cannot conceive of the Trinity, is, therefore, no real evidence against its truth.

But when it is said that the Trinity is inconceivable, it is sometimes meant that it is contrary to reason. If it be true that the doctrine is contrary to the principles and laws of thought, that is, if it be inherently absurd, its acceptance cannot be justified, and all seeming evidence of its truth must be really deceptive and false. If, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity were that God is one and three in the same sense, it would be absurd, and belief in it would be stultifying. But this is *not* the doctrine. It is affirmed that God is one in essence or substance, but three in the sense that there exists, in the unity of this one substance, a trinality of life. The truth of the Trinity is not contrary to reason, although it is above and beyond reason. What mental law forbids us to believe that there is an eternal trinality in the one absolute Being? What axiom is violated by the supposition that the mode of the divine existence is absolutely unique, and that to this mode of existence finite being furnishes no analogy? The doctrine of the Trinity is, in no proper sense, irrational. I repeat that the question concerning it is the question whether the evidence of its truth is sufficient to warrant its acceptance.

It will be seen, from what has been said, that the Trinity is a formula or symbol which aims to gather up into unity and harmony several of the most essential truths of Christianity. It is sometimes called the central truth of Christianity, and it is so in the sense that it conserves and combines the most fundamental truths

of Christian revelation. With the acceptance or rejection of the doctrine the evangelical system of theology has commonly stood or fallen. The doctrine of the deity of Christ, and the significance of his saving work, are involved in the truth of the triune nature of God. The denial of the Trinity on account of its mysteriousness has usually carried with it the denial of some of the most characteristic doctrines of Christianity on account of their mysteriousness. If men are too impatient of mystery to accept the Trinity, they will probably be too much so to believe in the incarnation, the atonement, and related truths. The doctrine of the Trinity represents the effort of the mind to define a conclusion respecting the internal nature of the Deity to which the facts of revelation conspire to lead. This effort can never be more than partially successful. The human mind can never adequately describe the interior constitution of the divine Being. It has, therefore, been truly said that "the term 'Trinity' is a hieroglyph, . . . an algebraic sign for an unknown, mysterious relation."[1] It represents an effort to co-ordinate several fundamental and well-attested truths, and has, as respects the *fact* of it, all the evidence which supports these truths. This statement does not, however, involve the claim that any attempt to describe the threefold nature of God is to be regarded as adequate. The doctrine of the Trinity rests upon grounds similar to those on which many other Christian doctrines rest, that of the incarnation, for example. The facts of Christ's appearance justify belief in an incarnation of God in humanity. This conclusion is urged upon us with a constraining

[1] Fisher, *Faith and Rationalism*, p. 53.

force which arises from certain historical facts and events. But these facts yield us no knowledge which enables us to describe the mode of the incarnation. We have always carefully to distinguish between the acceptance of a truth upon adequate evidence, and the satisfactory explanation of that truth in itself. We should be ready to accept a theory or doctrine for which the evidence is sufficient, even if we cannot satisfactorily explain or justify the same when considered as a mental problem by itself.

It seems to me to be a misfortune that the doctrine of the Trinity has been so generally presented as a problem or puzzle by itself, rather than as an insoluble mystery which we accept because the facts of revelation unmistakably point to it. The efforts at a close definition of the subject may well be regarded as somewhat presumptuous. They seem like attempts to break through the impenetrable mystery, and to fathom the very abyss of Deity. It is more natural and helpful to approach the subject from the side of the historic facts of revelation, and to stop short at the conclusion to which they lead us; viz., that the person and teaching of Christ, and the doctrine of the New Testament in general, justify and require the supposition of an essential trinality in the divine nature. If the doctrine of the Trinity is approached directly, and is taken up as a problem for solution, the mind will probably be baffled and repelled. The true method of approach is along the line of those facts of divine revelation which lead us at length to the heights of this mystery, where we can no longer define and describe, and where thought must acknowledge its bounds and find its resting-place.

Christians do not believe in the Trinity because they suppose that they can explain it, or can solve the difficulties connected with it, nor do they believe in it because it is a doctrine which taken by itself they can satisfactorily defend ; they believe in it because Christ's teaching and person require it, and because it lies embedded in the whole substance of Christian revelation.

If it is urged, as it sometimes is, that the doctrine is not taught in the Bible, the answer is, that, while it is not explicitly and formally taught, the elements of truth which compose it, such as the deity of Christ and the personality of the Spirit, and the facts which require it, such as the incarnation and atonement, are fundamental factors in all biblical revelation and teaching.

In emphasizing, as I have done, the mysteriousness of the doctrine, and the undesirableness of approaching it in *a priori* way as a problem to be solved, or a mystery to be cleared of difficulties by explanation and definition, I do not wish to be understood as admitting that no rational considerations can be justly urged in support of it. It may fairly be said, in the first place, that it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Absolute exists in a mode of being to which finite nature furnishes no adequate analogy. The Deity does not belong to any class of beings whose attributes can be made determining for the conception which we are to entertain of his nature. He stands alone and unique. It cannot be argued that because nature and human life furnish no examples of such a Trinity in unity as we believe to exist in God, the belief is contrary to reason and experience. It is above and beyond all experience ;

it may be, in important respects, above and beyond reason, but it is not on that account contrary to it.

There are, moreover, some suggestive facts which present themselves to our view in contemplating the universe, with which the idea of the Trinity in God does strikingly accord. We find, for example, that as we ascend the scale of being, life becomes diversified and complex. Not only do we observe this general fact in the world of matter, but in the world of mind as well. The mental life of the lower orders of creation appears very simple. Their souls act in but a few directions and in but a very limited sphere. The mental organization of man, on the contrary, is very complex and diversified. Philosophers have always analyzed his nature into distinguishable elements or faculties. One analysis, which regards his whole nature, distinguishes body, soul, and spirit. A more common analysis is that which describes the mental life as composed of intellect, sensibility, and will. Psychology is compelled to recognize, as does our popular speech, that there is a certain threefoldness in man, three sets of distinguishable powers or faculties, which do not, however, impair the unity of the total man. The one indivisible mind or soul acts in three distinguishable ways and relations.

I lay no stress on the threefoldness of this well-nigh universal analysis of man's mental constitution, nor do I urge the complexity of mental life in the highest form of being which we immediately know, as, in any strict sense, an argument for the doctrine of the Trinity. I do, however, claim that it would be according to analogy to expect that in the Supreme Being there should be a manifoldness and complexity of life surpassing those

which we find to exist in the highest forms of finite being. While we cannot maintain that any such considerations could ever conduct us to the Trinitarian doctrine of God, we do claim that when once divine revelation has furnished us adequate ground for forming and holding that doctrine, we are confirmed in its reasonableness by finding that it accords with all that we can learn of the nature of being in general. Considerations like this which I have presented, are not strictly a part of the evidence for the truth of the Trinity; but they do fall into line with that evidence, and serve to confirm it from the side of reason and observation.

I turn now to a brief consideration of the argument for the doctrine of the Trinity which is derived from the nature of God as love. We must suppose that there was once a time when this finite world did not exist. If God alone is uncreated and self-existent, then the entire universe, including all men and angels, must have begun to be. Let our thought now travel back to the time when God alone existed. Shall we think of him as absolutely single and solitary, dwelling in eternal silence and self-contemplation, or as having within himself the conditions of a social life? Which conception best befits the notion of his inherent perfection? If God is truly the absolute Being, as theists commonly suppose; if he is not dependent upon the world in respect to his own existence and perfection, but has freely created the same — then must his nature be perfect in itself, and in this nature all the conditions of blessedness must be realized. It seems to me that the Trinitarian doctrine of God, which affirms distinctions and relations

as eternally existing in his essence, best answers to the idea of his inherent perfection, because it supposes the divine life to be, by its very nature, social and self-communicating.

If this seem an abstract method of presenting the subject, let us approach it by saying that there is an eternal Fatherhood in God. He is not merely the Father of men and of all higher orders of created beings. He did not at some point begin to be a Father. The relations of Fatherhood and Sonship which concretely express to us what we count most dear in the nature of God, are eternal and constituent in his very being. Let me present this thought in the words of one of the most independent and suggestive living writers on theology, once himself a Unitarian, — Mr. Richard Holt Hutton: "If Christ is the eternal Son of God, God is indeed and in essence a Father; the social nature, the spring of love, is of the very essence of the eternal Being; the communication of his life, the reciprocation of his affection, dates from beyond time, belongs, in other words, to the very being of God. Now, some persons think that such a certainty, even when attained, has very little to do with human life. 'What does it matter,' they say, 'what the absolute nature of God is, if we know what he is *to us?* How can it concern us to know what he was before our race existed, if we know what he is to all his creatures now?' These questions seem plausible, but I believe they point to a very deep error. I can answer for myself that the Unitarian conviction that God is — *as* God and in his eternal essence — a single, solitary personality, influenced my imagination and the whole color of my faith most pro-

9591

foundly. Such a conviction, thoroughly realized, renders it impossible to identify any of the social attributes with his real *essence* — renders it difficult not to regard power as the true root of all other divine life. If we are to believe that *the Father* was from all time, we must believe that he was *as* a Father; that is, that love was actual in him as well as potential, that the communication of life and thought, and fulness of joy, was of the inmost nature of God, and never began to be, if God never began to be."[1]

It is commonly agreed among Christians that the most perfect description which can be given of the divine nature is that which is contained in the scriptural statement — "God is love." If this means, not merely that God, as a matter of fact, does love, not merely that he *may be* or that he *has* love, but that love is an eternal quality of his moral nature which is absolutely fundamental and constitutive in his being — then it would seem that there must be within his nature itself, occasion and scope for the exercise of love, apart from his relations to finite existence. Love is a social attribute, and the conditions and relations which love implies must exist in the very essence of God. In the Trinitarian view of God, these conditions have forever existed in the eternal personal distinctions and reciprocal relations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God did not begin to love when he created, nor is his love a mere potentiality which in the silent depths of eternity looks forward to creation for its satisfaction. Love is the very core and essence of God's moral nature, and as

[1] Essay on *The Incarnation and Principles of Evidence*, in *Theological Essays*, page 257.

b1,197

such is ceaselessly active within the internal relations of Deity. Love is eternally in full exercise, since God *is* love, and love ever found in God's own perfect Being the full fruition and blessedness of its exercise in self-communication and fellowship.

We thus see that, despite the difficulties which the Trinitarian doctrine presents to the imagination, it has the great advantage of according with the highest conception which revelation yields us of the moral nature of God. It enables us to maintain that God eternally *is* what he is revealed to be; that the moral perfections of God, and the sum of all those perfections — love, are not mere modes of his action in relation to finite being, but component qualities of his ethical nature, absolutely fundamental in his essence. The Trinitarian doctrine, in this aspect of it, is a method of maintaining that the most sacred realities of personal existence, all of which are best summed up in the word *love*, are reflections in our nature of the glorious and eternal perfections of God in whose moral image we are made. This view of God, abstrusely as it may be stated, is not meaningless and valueless in its practical bearing on human life. It means that we are to think of God, not first of all as mere power or will, but as a Father. It puts love on the throne of the universe by making it central in the nature and action of God.

The Trinity is a practical truth. High as it is above reason, baffling as it is to the imagination and to thought, it accords with the demands and deliverances of the Christian consciousness. It conserves the truth of Christ's essential divinity and that of the reality and power of the work of the Spirit, which he

described as the sequel and completion of his own work. It accords with belief in the incarnation, and makes the redemptive work of Christ a divine work. All this the Christian consciousness craves and requires. We want to know, not merely that God has sent us a message, not merely that in Jesus he has raised up an exceptionally pure and holy member of the human race, but that in him God has come to us, and that his work of revelation and redemption is a work of God. Our sense of sin is met and answered only by the knowledge of a divine Redeemer. Mystery as the Trinity is, it is a mystery which is full of heavenly light. If it defies all our powers of description and definition, it does, at the same time, enrich our whole conception of God, and heighten our estimate both of the Redeemer and of his work. It is a mystery of light, not of darkness. It does not becloud the mind and paralyze religious thought as would a doctrine which should run counter to the highest moral instincts and feelings of the soul; it rather quickens devout reflection and kindles aspiration, by the emphasis which it lays upon love as central in God, and upon the Son of God and the Holy Spirit as real powers which have ever been active in the human life and history, influencing and illuminating men, and reconciling the world unto God.

The doctrine of the Trinity conserves the idea of the richness and fulness of the divine life and love, and of the amplitude of their manifestation. According to its terms, God is revealed to us as our Father, and his eternal nature is shown to be fatherly; Jesus Christ is presented to us as a true incarnation of God in humanity, a Redeemer whose divine person and work are a veri-

table revelation of God; and the Holy Spirit is conceived of as an actual divine agent who dwells and works in human life, influencing and moulding it into the divine likeness. According to the Trinitarian doctrine, we have to do, in Christianity, with divine realities. Our religion is not a subjective play of fine ideas, memories, or aspirations. God is in his world. He has always been in his world, revealing himself, in invisible ways, through the Light that lighteth every man, and through the action of the all-pervading Spirit; but at length he came by an incarnation into humanity, in order that, through union with man, he might make his self-disclosure more clear, adequate, and apprehensible. Our religion is intensely supernatural. It is fitted to quicken and foster in our hearts a living sense of God. The forces that provide and complete our salvation are truly divine. It is God that has wrought for us and in us; our life is ensphered in Deity, and filled with the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

CHAPTER VII

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

The person of Jesus Christ is the great miracle of history. It is at once the mystery and the glory of the religion which is called by his name. Supreme and solitary, Christ stands among men, towering above all others. Yet his superiority to all other men does not involve a separateness from them in interest and sympathy. He is most closely identified with his fellows; he is ideally, intensely human. He is elevated above other men just because he represents humanity in its perfection, because in him we behold our common human nature dignified and glorified by the disclosure of its divine origin and destiny.

We must approach the character of Christ from this human side. We must look upon him as he is presented to us in the clear light of the Gospels, and must listen to the words which he speaks to us concerning God and ourselves. We need bring with us no formulated theory of his person, no definition of the mystery of his being; enough that we bring a serious, reverent, and teachable mind, a willingness to hear and to learn what we know that we most want and most need to know. Let this, then, be our method of approach. Who he is, whence he came, and how his person is to be explained, need not now concern us. Let us hear

what he says to us, and try to estimate its value and use for our life; let us look, as far as we can, into his mind, and put ourselves under the power of his spirit — then we may naturally raise the question, what we are to think of the origin and nature of his person.

When we listen to what the Gospels tell us of him, a remarkable fact meets us at the outset. He seems to have made it his first concern to induce men to accept his idea of God and his principles of human living, rather than to adopt any particular view of his own personality. A critical, comparative study of the Gospels leads to the conclusion that he was very slow to announce himself as the Messiah, and that he wished to avoid exciting too keen an interest in the discussion of the nature of his person. His characteristic truths, however, concerning God and man and duty, he was always urging upon the minds of men. He certainly made important claims respecting his person and mission; but he seemed willing to let these claims take care of themselves, if only men would repent of sin, believe in God, and try to live lives of unselfish love. He offered himself to men through the truth which he brought to them, and the spirit of heavenly peace which pervaded his life. He refused to compel the wonder and homage of men by miracle. He sought to quicken faith by appealing to what was highest and holiest in men. He had little confidence in the zeal and devotion of any professed adherents who had not caught something of the sense of God and of the spirit of trust and service which filled his own heart, and who had not felt, in some measure, the attracting and uplifting power of the ideal of life which he presented.

The Gospels set vividly before us many a scene in which Jesus is heard speaking to a motley company about him. What is he saying? Let us listen. He is speaking to men about God, and is teaching them to pray to him, beginning, "Our Father." He is telling them how to be like him in love, in sympathy, and pity. He is telling them what the kingdom of God is, and how it is to come on earth and in the hearts of men. Here is certainly a man whose whole mind is filled with the thought of God, and whose whole life is inspired with the sense of his presence. Here is a man who speaks to his fellow-men about God in a clear, confident, and assuring tone. He is one who is himself absolutely sure of God, sure of his existence, his character, his providence, and his love. Moreover, he speaks in a tone of calm, yet commanding conviction. The people, as they listened, were astonished; they had never heard religious truth taught with such a sense of inner certitude, with such an apparent consciousness of divine authority.

He also speaks to men about themselves. He at once discloses to men their true destiny, and their actual failures in achieving it. His ideal of life is the highest possible — likeness to God himself; and his interpretation of life's true meaning opens to the spirit of man a large, free world of thought and achievement. His words search the hiding-places of human motive. He knows what is in man, and how firmly, yet kindly, does he lay bare the secrets of the human heart. There never was such an interpreter of human life as Jesus was. He was not merely a critic who mercilessly exposed the faults and sins of men; he was the friend of

those whose misguided lives he sought to restore to purity and strength. He brought his appeal to bear upon man's whole nature. The sense of God and of the divine origin and meaning of life which he aimed to kindle in man, roused mind, heart, and will to new activity and energy. The truths concerning God and concerning man's kinship to God which he brought to men were fitted to impart a new incentive to thought, and to fire every noble emotion of which the soul is capable.

Another remarkable thing about the personality of Jesus is that, while he had the keenest sense of what was sinful and wrong, he never in any way implied that he was personally conscious of sin. It is inconceivable that he should have failed to apply his penetrating analysis of sin to himself unless he had believed himself to be free from sin. Moreover, his marvellous knowledge of the human heart and character excludes the supposition that he did not know himself. As he appears to us to be sinless, so we must believe that he appeared to himself. Or, to state the thought positively, he was conscious of perfect holiness of motive and action, of perfect harmony in purpose and desire with the will of God. He prays often to God; but he never asks for forgiveness, for he does always those things that please God. He intercedes for the sinful world, but he does not intercede for himself; and he challenges the men of his time to convict him of an act of sin (John viii. 46).

With these brief hints respecting the import of Jesus' teaching, his searching analysis of motive, and his personal sense of sinlessness, let us turn to a study of the principal elements of his perfection of character.

The completeness of his character is seen in the full and harmonious development of all the legitimate qualities of manhood. We feel at once, as soon as we begin to examine the character of Jesus, that it is free from all oddities and exaggerations. It would sound strangely inappropriate to speak of "peculiarities" in him. There is no abnormal development of some special qualities such as make the marked traits of the men and women whom we know. We could ascribe, I am sure, no particular "temperament" to him. We should not think for a moment of applying to him any of those terms by which we are wont to designate the special qualities which stand out with peculiar prominence in the characters of our friends. We feel their inadequacy, almost their impropriety, at once. Who would think of saying of Jesus, for example, that he was a very intellectual man, or that he possessed a logical mind? Who would ever speak of him as a person of specially strong will, or as a man of the emotional type? We feel at once that to speak thus is to imply a one-sided development in his character, and from this we almost instinctively shrink. When we speak thus of our fellow-men, we take it for granted — as well we may — that certain qualities are disproportionately prominent.

When we approach the character of Jesus, we see at once that there is something absolutely unique about it. It is peculiar just because it possesses no "peculiarities." There is a repose, strength, and completeness about it which almost disarm criticism, and seem to forbid any comparison of qualities. If one were asked, for example, "Was Jesus an energetic person?" he

might half hesitate to answer, not, indeed, because he can doubt the silent but powerful energy of his life, but because by answering "Yes" he might seem to imply that his energy was disproportionate to the quietness and repose of his character, as we are wont to do when we speak of one another. His energy was wonderful, and that just because it was not fitful and impulsive, like that of the men whom we commonly distinguish as energetic, but quiet and unobtrusive always. With what a calm, steady perseverance did he walk through human life; and yet with such an unassuming quietness that he attracted no attention in the world save within the narrow limits of one of the more remote Roman provinces. No writer of his time makes any mention of his name except the evangelists whose records lie before us in the Gospels. Yet he was no recluse. He mingled freely with his fellow-men in their work and at their feasts, in their joys and in their sorrows. None of the words which designate a peculiar type of man are applicable to him. Wonderfully energetic, patient, and persevering, yet no enthusiast; wonderfully calm, quiet, and even reserved, yet no recluse. What can we call him if we wish to keep to the language of our every-day life? Only what the Scriptures do — "The man, Christ Jesus," "The Son of man," the true type, the perfect realization of sinless humanity.

If we choose to take any other qualities of the truest manhood, and see how they are illustrated in the character of Jesus, we shall reach, I am sure, the same conclusion. We shall see that they belong to him, but that they are set in such perfect equipoise with

what we are accustomed to call the opposite qualities, that they do not attract special attention to themselves. With us it is generally the marked features of character which attract attention; in Jesus it is no special quality or set of qualities, but the rounded completeness of the whole character.

The ideal of good taste in dress is, to effect such a combination that there shall be absolutely nothing especially noticeable except the harmony and fitness of the whole. The law for beauty in character is analogous. When single qualities shine out with such unique and peculiar splendor, the brightness is often but the contrast with the real background of character. The ideal character is found only in the complete, symmetrical development of the total man. This completeness of character we see in Jesus when we consider the harmony of will and emotion, of firmness and tenderness, which always characterized his life. Always firm, and even severe, in the presence of hypocrisy and sin; always gentle and sympathetic in the presence of sorrow and distress; yet there was never anything arbitrary in his firmness, never anything weak in his gentleness. There was no clashing of opposing feelings and passions in his life. The tender and kindly emotions of his heart were never, as so often with us, subdued and stifled under the action of a stalwart will; and the will, the true rudder of character, was not swayed hither and thither by every passing current of emotion. There was harmony among all the elements of character, because all were normally developed together.

It should, however, be observed that this harmony

did not result from any toning down of the powers and activities of the soul. The whole life was at its maximum of energy and strength. It was the harmony of intense vigor, in which all the powers operated in their fullest force, but without clashing upon one another. It was the harmony of the most real, but of complete manhood. Jesus is thus seen to be humanity at its climax. His life gathers up into itself all that is most truly and grandly human, and holds it up as the promise of what we shall be when we are like him.

The completeness of Jesus' life is also seen in the fact that in him appears no single, local, or national type of character, but the "universal man." Cicero relates that when Socrates was asked to what state he belonged, he answered: "To the world;" for, adds Cicero, "he considered himself a citizen of the world at large." Not even the greatest men of antiquity, however, seem to have risen wholly above national limits. It is not difficult to see that Socrates did not do so. The lives of these men were closely bound up with the state in which they lived. The limits of country marked men off sharply from one another, and created barriers over which the mutual sympathies and interests of men were not accustomed to cross. Indeed, one of the choicest virtues among the ancients was supreme devotion to the state. The chief significance of the individual was found, not so much in an independent spirit and in broad and generous sympathy, as in identification with the social organism. And even now how few characters there are that unite local and national interests with a sympathy as wide as the world — how few that are raised above the limits of

social or class affiliations, and are in the broadest sense human! Now let us notice how the character of Jesus stands in contrast with these limited types of character with which we are familiar. If we look for this universality of his character in indifference to the friends among whom he lived, or to the nation of which he was a part, we shall go widely astray. Jesus was a Jew by birth and education; he lived and labored among Jews; he respected their customs, and obeyed their laws. He was in no sense an eccentric or lawless person. He was a loyal and obedient citizen of the country in which he lived.

But of Jewish peculiarities and prejudices we find nothing whatever in him. His character is in no sense local or national; his sympathies are in no degree limited by any boundaries of country or limits of time. They are as wide as the race — as wide as the interests, needs, and sins of mankind. Here, again, we see how in Christ is realized the idea of common, universal humanity. He is conformed to the type of social and religious life which belongs to the age and country in which he lives; but his life is in no way restricted or narrowed by these. It is evident that they are incidental to his life, and in no way the measure of it. His outlook on the world is too wide, and his insight into human life is too deep, to allow him to set his heart on any temporary social organization as essential and necessary.

We find the same breadth in the character of Jesus if we consider his relations to his kindred and nearest friends. He is never indifferent to those relations. He is a true and affectionate son, brother, and friend.

But his life knows no family or social limits. He is more than the friend of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, for he called all trustful disciples friends; he is more than the brother of James and Joses and Simon, for every one who does the will of God is to him a sister or brother; he is more than the son of Mary, for he is the Son of man. In a word, he embraces in his mind and heart all mankind; and, by the principles which he introduces and applies to life, he transforms what is special into that which is genuinely human and universally true.

The completeness of the character of Jesus is further seen in the union in him of the qualities that are most truly womanly with those that are considered as more distinctively masculine. His nature had the blended qualities of both sexes. Frederick W. Robertson considers that the loss or obscuration of this truth in the thought and life of the early church goes far to explain the origin and development of the worship of Mary.[1] Jesus was pictured to the minds of men chiefly in the stern aspect of the Judge. The severer elements of his character were emphasized to the neglect of his more than human gentleness, tenderness, and patience. In a word, the men of that time held but one side of the character of Christ. They held a half-truth, which, as so often happens, tends to complete itself by taking on an entire error. Christ as presented in this stern, cold aspect could not satisfy the Christian heart. Men felt that the milder elements of character, which are the glory of woman, are also divine. But not perceiving

[1] See the discourse on the Glory of the Virgin Mother, in his *Sermons preached at Brighton*, page 383 ff., Harper & Brothers, New York, 1880.

that all that was most truly womanly, and all that was most truly manly, were met in Christ; that his divine manhood meant, not divine masculineness, but divine humanity; not perceiving that in Christ "there is neither male nor female," and yet feeling that these milder qualities must be recognized and honored, they naturally sought some other embodiment of them. Having practically forgotten one side of the character of Jesus, the Christian consciousness spontaneously tried to supply the place that was left, by crowning a queen of heaven by the side of the Son of God. All this was the result of a fragmentary, one-sided view of Christ.

Such, in outline, is Mr. Robertson's view of the real motive and origin of the cultus of Mary. It is certainly suggestive, and is probably essentially true. The church needed to see and hold the completeness of Christ; to see that in him, and in the ideal of character which he presents, are met all the qualities that are most truly, most nobly human.

It is these facts to which we have called attention — the elevation of the teaching of Jesus, the dignity of his person, his sinlessness, and positive completeness of character — which, in connection with the special claims which he makes, give rise to the problem of his unique personality. That according to our Gospels he asserts his pre-existence before the world was, and declares that he shared the glory of the Father and enjoyed a peculiarly close fellowship with him, cannot be denied. These extraordinary claims, however, might well be questioned were they not re-enforced by the facts of his life and character. Moreover, we find this lofty con-

ception of the person of Jesus reflected in the writings of those who had known him best. When all these considerations are combined, we cannot wonder that the church has asserted that Jesus Christ was more than a man; that no possible compound of mere human qualities could produce such a character.

The facts which have just been mentioned have led to the formulation of the doctrine that Jesus Christ mysteriously united in himself both divinity and humanity. This mystery has been accepted and cherished by the greater part of the Christian world, not because the mind was able to construe or resolve it, but because the facts of Christ's teaching, person, and claims were held to require it, and because it was believed to be attested by his power in human life and history. It is true that there have not been wanting believers in the divineness of Christ's mission and the peerless superiority of his character, who have declined to accept the doctrine of his proper divinity, or even that of his pre-existence. In such cases, I think it may fairly be said, that impatience of mystery has overborne evidence of which no candid mind can fail to feel the force. It is not strange, however, that some minds, looking at the doctrine of Christ's Deity rather on the side of its mysteriousness, than on that of its evidence and its adaptation to meet the needs of man's religious nature, have withheld from it their assent.

That God should reveal himself through an incarnation in humanity is, indeed, an unparalleled mystery, but is not without some confirmation from analogy. God reveals himself in all his works, and especially in man, who is, in a special sense, kindred in his moral

nature to God, and in whom God is believed by all religious minds to make himself felt and known. The moral likeness of man to God suggests the possibility of the incarnation. If, now, the Trinitarian conception of the divine nature be adopted, there remains no formidable barrier to the acceptance of the doctrine of the incarnation. I am convinced that if we can separate the problem of the *method* of the incarnation from the considerations which favor the *fact*, and can frankly admit that the former is an absolute mystery, we shall find that the idea of the incarnation will commend itself as both fitting into the process of biblical revelation, and as answering to the demands of man's religious nature in general, and to the verdict of the Christian consciousness in particular. Let us briefly notice each of these points in order.

The Bible represents a process of progressive revelation. Of this process the incarnation is the culmination. All earlier and less complete forms of revelation point toward God's final personal disclosure of himself in the person of the eternal Son. This revelation is in terms of human life and experience. Earlier revelations of God through the providential guidance of nations, the equipment of chosen leaders, and the inspiration of prophets, were, by their very nature, less direct and perfect than is the personal self-revelation in Jesus Christ. The will of God may, indeed, be partially revealed by commandments and decrees, but the nature of God is adequately disclosed to mankind only in him who can say, "I and the Father are one; he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John x. 30; xiv. 9). Having exhausted all other possibilities of revela-

tion, God at length makes a personal revelation; he comes into humanity in the person of his Son; he assumes human conditions and relations; he passes through the human experiences of temptation and trial, yet without sin; he sits beneath the shadow of every human woe, and passing, at length, through death itself, re-enters his heavenly glory.

It was this *life* which reveals God as nothing else does or can. It is in what Jesus Christ *was* that God has expressed most plainly his own nature and his thoughts and purposes toward man. This conception of the significance of the incarnation Tennyson has aptly embodied in the lines:—

> And so the Word had breath, and wrought
> With human hands the creed of creeds
> In loveliness of perfect deeds.[1]

This revelation of God in Christ throws a most significant light upon the whole purpose of God in history. Mystery as it is in its nature and method, it is not a mystery which darkens and confuses, but one which illumines. In its light the phenomena of more rudimentary religions assume new meaning. The truths which underlie their rites and observances are set in plainer relief by the revelation in Christ, while the misconceptions and crudities of such systems are more clearly seen by its light and are allowed to fall away. Especially important is the light which the truth of the incarnation throws upon Jewish history. The revelation of God in Christ is its fulfilment and its explanation. The religious peculiarities of that history

[1] *In Memoriam*, Canto xxxvi.

present to us an insoluble enigma, except upon the view that God was preparing for some signal self-manifestation such as Christianity finds in the incarnation. Involving as it does an inexplicable mystery, the incarnation crowns the scheme of divine revelation as the Bible represents it, and itself helps to explain many other facts of biblical history and teaching which on no other supposition can be so satisfactorily explained.

The truth of the incarnation also answers important demands of man's religious nature. Deeply impressed, as man must ever be, with the mystery of the world and of life, believing that the world must have its origin and ground in reason, and that man must be destined for immortality, yet finding the world full of perplexity, the human spirit longs for nothing so much as for an adequate and authoritative disclosure of God. After all our searching, God is still invisible. We seem to hear his voice, but it is a voice out of a realm of mystery into which our eyes cannot penetrate. We are still left vacillating between our native conviction of God and the uncertainty which arises from the lack of a direct manifestation of him. We can say with confidence that if God should disclose himself in a wholly unique manner through an incarnation, that disclosure, when properly attested, would afford satisfaction to one of man's deepest wants. I do not claim that we should be warranted in arguing that these desires of man's religious nature for a fuller and more direct knowedge of God than nature and conscience supply, are an *evidence* that the person and work of Christ are the divinely appointed media of communicating such knowledge. I do, however, maintain that

when such a revelation as that which purports to have been made in Christ gives credible evidence of its genuineness, this evidence is powerfully re-enforced by the evident adaptation of the revelation to human needs. These needs cannot, indeed, prove that God will reveal himself; but they can bear impressive testimony to the reality of revelation, when once it is made. It matters not how adequate the external or historic evidence of religious truths may be, they are never clothed for the mind with their highest certitude until the heart attests their truth in experience.

We are thus led to the consideration of a final point — the answer of the Christian consciousness to the truth of the incarnation. In Christ the craving of the soul for some embodiment of divinity in a form which it can apprehend and construe is met. In him the vagueness and abstractness which surround the name of God are, in a measure, dispelled, and he is brought near to men. His person has been to mankind the most helpful interpretation of God. In Jesus Christ God is — if we may so speak — translated into terms of human life. I do not forget that this general statement of what Christ is for the Christian heart might be assented to by those who hold various conceptions of his person. I cannot help thinking, however, that the statement has its truest, highest meaning only on the presupposition of the proper divinity of Christ. On this view, God has come to us. Christ's work is the action of God in redemption. This view clothes his work with an intense and solemn reality. When we follow the Christ in his teaching, miracles, suffering, and death, we are reading in terms of human experience what God is doing

for our salvation I believe that the consensus of the Christian world attests the true deity of Christ. We need such an authoritative and direct disclosure of God as this view of his person presupposes. It is not enough that God should send us a prophet, even though he be the greatest of all prophets, and bear a fuller and clearer message than any other. It is not enough that God should send into our world some supernal intelligence to speak to us of himself and of heaven. It is not merely a message from God that we want; it is God himself. For man's salvation is required, not merely a proclamation of truths about God, but an actual residence and operation of God in human life and history.

Many lines of evidence converge to establish the truth of this high conception of our Saviour's person. Such a revelation of God in humanity is a fitting culmination of the magnificent drama of revelation. The self-testimony of Jesus, and the teachings of those who had penetrated most deeply into the knowledge of his person and spirit, unite to proclaim the deity of our Lord. To the idea of an incarnation of God correspond the ineradicable longings of the human soul to know God in some apprehensible form; and when God is thus revealed, he is recognized and welcomed by those who have the spiritual perception to behold him. Thus do the voices of revelation unite and blend with the testimony of the Christian faith and experience of the world in the confession which is voiced in one of the noblest hymns of the ages: —

> Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ;
> Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

The nature and office of the Holy Spirit are progressively disclosed in Scripture. In the Old Testament, "the Spirit" is hardly more than a name for the power or presence of God. In the narrative of the Creation, for example, the Spirit of God is represented as brooding upon the dark waste of waters (Gen. i. 2). The Spirit is the wonder-working power of God. He sends forth his Spirit, and men are created (Ps. civ. 30). By his Spirit he bestows strength upon heroes, skill upon artificers, and the knowledge of his will upon prophets. But in the Old Testament the Spirit is not regarded as a person, nor is his sanctifying function in the life of man to any great extent recognized.

The completed doctrine of the Spirit, as it appears in the Bible, is found in those farewell discourses of our Lord to his disciples which are recorded in chapters xiv. – xvi. of the Gospel of John.[1]

Here the Spirit is described as a person — a self distinct from Christ. He is "another Comforter" or "Advocate." He is to be sent by the Father in Christ's name, and is to bring to the remembrance of the disciples what Christ has taught. Personal pronouns are

[1] For a critical discussion of the doctrine of the Spirit as there presented, I would refer the reader to my treatise on *The Johannine Theology*, chap. viii.

applied to him: "Me shall he glorify"[1] (John xvi. 14); "He shall teach you all things" (xiv. 26); "He shall bear witness concerning me" (xv. 26), etc. The acts and offices of a person are continually attributed to him, such as speaking, interpreting, glorifying Christ, and convincing the world of sin.

The doctrine of the Spirit is thus one of the most distinctive elements of the Christian gospel. It was most fully elaborated by our Saviour himself in those solemn hours just before his passion, when he opened the deepest treasures of his mind and heart to his disciples. The language in which he sets forth the office and work which the Spirit is to discharge is most impressive. The Spirit is not only to be his representative in the world, but is to carry forward and complete his work. Jesus regarded his own work as but a beginning of the great process of redemption and sanctification. The work of the Spirit is invested with special interest and importance on account of the significant relations into which that work is set. Its relation to Christ's own historic manifestation and to the advance of Christian truth and life in the world, offers a theme of unsurpassed interest to the student of Christian thought and history.

Let us now observe some of the more important bearings of the doctrine of the Spirit upon religious thought and life.

This doctrine accentuates the truth of an actual presence of God in the world and in human life. Experience shows that the thought of mankind concerning God tends strongly toward one of two extremes. It

[1] The Greek is: ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει.

tends either toward a pantheistic identification of God with nature, or toward a deistic separation of God from the world and from human life. The Christian doctrine avoids both these extremes with their pernicious consequences. It conserves the truth which pantheism exaggerates, by affirming the presence of God in his world, while it also conserves the truth which deism exaggerates, by maintaining the independence and supremacy of God in his relation to the world. Now, it is the former of these truths — that of the living presence of God in his world — which the doctrine of the Spirit especially emphasizes. This it does, of course, with special reference to the religious life of mankind, without excluding, however, the elements of truth which the Old Testament contains respecting the relations of the divine Spirit to nature and to the physical and mental life of man.

A living sense of the presence of God, an intense conviction of the supernatural, is an essential element in all religion which is to have great power in the life of men. When that sense of God is lost, religion soon loses its hold upon the conscience and the heart. One of the greatest elements of power in Roman Catholic teaching lies in the stress which is laid upon the divine presence in the services and sacraments of the church. The devout worshipper feels, as he kneels at her altars and participates in her rites, that he is brought into contact with the supernatural, and that through the mediations of the church real divine power is bestowed upon him. In this whole conception of religion there lies a truth which must be cherished by those who would conserve the reality and value of public worship.

The presence of God should not be limited to priestly mediations or confined to holy places or holy rites. It should be more broadly and spiritually conceived; but it must not be less clearly recognized and felt by us than by those who associate it with special religious rites. The vivid realization of the presence of God, and the reverence which springs out of that realization, lie at the foundation of all sincere worship and of all deep religious conviction and experience. Religion is correlation with God.

Now, the truth of the Holy Spirit's office and function is fitted to fulfil the conditions of a deep and strong religious life. It assures us that the religious life is a divine reality. It is no mere subjective play of our own thought and feeling. Religion involves relations with the divine; real divine powers operate upon and within the Christian man. The religious life, according to the doctrine of the Spirit, begins in an impartation from God, and is fostered by the presence and power of God. The life of love, and all the virtues of the Christian character, spring from fellowship with God through the indwelling of the Spirit. The doctrine of the Spirit proclaims that God is very near us, and that forces of the spiritual and eternal order constantly penetrate our life. This conception makes religion intensely real. It is the divine life in man. Eternal life is already here; the world of time and sense is swallowed up in the world of the Spirit, and life is transfigured by the presence and the love of God.

The bearing of the work of the Spirit upon the religious life and character is still more clearly seen

when we consider the relation of his work to the historic mission of Christ. If, now, we turn to those chapters of John which contain our Lord's fullest teaching upon the work of the Spirit, we observe, first of all, that the Spirit is said to come "in his name" (John xiv. 26), that is, in continuation of Christ's own purpose and work for men. The work of Christ and that of the Spirit belong to the same sphere and contemplate the same great end, — the salvation and sanctification of men. The Spirit's office represents the completion and application of the Saviour's work. This carrying forward of our Lord's saving mission the Spirit accomplishes by reminding the disciples of what Jesus had said, and by interpreting and applying his truth so as to bring their lives increasingly under its power and into accord with its demands (John xiv. 26; xvi. 13–15). Thus the mission of the Spirit is accomplished on the basis of the historic work of Christ, and is continually realizing, in the actual life of the world, the ends which the work of Christ contemplated.

The doctrine of the Spirit thus clothes the incarnation with new dignity and significance. The work of Christ while on earth is taken up and carried forward through all the ages of time, by the interpreting, sanctifying, and convincing work of the Spirit; and this great process of redemption will never cease till the purposes of God in man's salvation shall be complete. The appearance of Christ on earth is, in this view, no isolated event. It is not a mere incident of ancient history. It is a fact of world-wide significance. It represents truths and forces which are of permanent validity and perpetual power. It does not stand in

the dim distance, vague, undefined, and separate from the life of to-day. Through the work of the Spirit, it is related to every age, and to the life of every man. It makes its appeal anew to every generation and to every individual soul. The voice of God to man is not a mere echo from the Judean hills; it is a living voice speaking directly to the heart through the Spirit.

To all this one may exclaim, "Oh, the mystery of it!" to which we may well respond, "Yes; but the need — the necessity of it!" No religion can satisfy the soul of man which consists merely of fine ideas and memories. The power of religion must rapidly wane when the sense of actual divine powers operating in human life is supplanted by a play of man's own sentiments and reflections. Now, the truth of the Spirit's function stands in perpetual protest against this weakening subjectivism in religion; it affirms that the realm of faith is a realm of realities, not of phantoms, and that, in accepting Christ as our Master, we do not merely adopt a moral ideal, but we put our lives under the transforming power of a living, present Saviour.

The doctrine of the Spirit is adapted to the preservation of the mystical element in religion. Mysticism, it is to be admitted, has its own peculiar dangers. It may lead, for example, to a disregard of the historic facts of Christianity, and to an exaggerated estimate of personal conviction and experience. Its representatives may sometimes confuse their own views of religious truth with revelation itself, and may assign to the inner light which the

individual enjoys a greater value and authority than to the words of the Master himself. But these tendencies spring from the perversion of a truth. A mystical element is essential in religion; that is to say, religion is a matter of inner experience. It involves a secret, spiritual union with God — an assured conviction of fellowship with the divine. The certitude which is begotten of this conviction is an element of no small importance in our religious life. If we cannot call it a source of authority in matters of faith, we can, at least, say that no voice of authority which speaks to us from without could ever win our complete assent without this answer of the heart in experience — this inward attestation of the truth of revelation. No word of God becomes truly such to us except through that appropriation and testing of it in our own lives by which it approves itself to be the truth.

Upon the importance of this inner experience, and upon the value of the certitude which it begets, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit lays strong emphasis. It warrants the conviction that the experience of a multitude of believers in the course of many centuries is a source of evidence for the truth of Christianity. The religion of Christ is continually proving itself true in the life of the individual Christian, and in the collective life of the church.[1] If the doctrine of the Spirit be true, we are justified in appealing, not merely to historical proofs of the divine origin of our religion, but to the verification of its truth in

[1] On this subject I would refer the reader to the classic treatise of the late Professor Stearns, *The Evidence of Christian Experience*, New York, 1891.

the Christian life of the ages. If the divine Spirit does really continue Christ's work in the world, we are certainly justified in holding that his testimony in the hearts of men is of the utmost importance in attesting its divine reality and power. The work of the Spirit makes Christianity something living and real. It was never more powerfully operative in the world than it is to-day. The historic mission of the Christ was an interpretation in terms of human speech and action, of divine powers and processes, which are in constant movement in the life of mankind.

Many Christian people have felt that it would have been an inestimable privilege to live in the time and place of the Saviour's incarnation, and to have seen his human form and heard his voice. There is reason to believe that among the Christians of the apostolic age some who had enjoyed this privilege regarded themselves as highly favored beyond their brethren. But the words of Jesus himself would seem to suggest a different view of the matter. He tells his disciples that it is better for them that he should depart from them. To possess the Spirit whom he will send as his representative is better than to have his bodily presence (John xvi. 7). He clearly intimates that greater benefits are in store for his followers in the day of the Spirit than can be theirs in the day of his visible presence. Greater works than he has done, greater conquests for the truth, greater achievements in righteousness, shall follow his departure (John xiv. 12); while, under the illumination of the Spirit, prayer shall assume new value and power (John xvi. 23, 24). There is, indeed, a blessing in store for him who sees the Saviour in his beneficent human

activity and, on that account, believes on him; but there is a still greater blessing reserved for him who believes without having seen (John xx. 29), because such faith is, in the nature of the case, freer from all elements of human imperfection, and springs from a deeper spiritual apprehension of what Christ essentially is. Such a faith arises from the soul's sense of its need, and from its perception of the adaptation of Christ to satisfy that need. Such faith, therefore, springs from what is deepest in human nature, and lays hold upon what is deepest in Christ. It sees Christ as the bread of life to the soul because of what he *is*. It mounts to the very heart of Christ, and is satisfied with nothing less than the hiding of its life with him in God. Though, like the Apostle Paul, it may once have known Christ after the flesh, yet as it grows and deepens, it at length knows him so no more (2 Cor. v. 16). This beatitude of those who have never seen Christ in the flesh Mr. Whittier has interpreted thus: —

> And what if my feet may not tread where he stood,
> Nor my ears hear the dashing of Galilee's flood,
> Nor my eyes see the cross which he bowed him to bear,
> Nor my knees press Gethsemane's altar of prayer?
>
> Yet, Loved of the Father, thy Spirit is near
> To the meek, and the lowly, and penitent here;
> And the voice of thy love is the same even now
> As at Bethany's tomb or on Olivet's brow.
>
> Oh, the outward hath gone! — but in glory and power,
> The *Spirit* surviveth the things of an hour;
> Unchanged, undecaying, its Pentecost flame
> On the heart's secret altar is burning the same![1]

[1] *Palestine*, closing stanzas.

The observations which have thus far engaged our attention lead us to a more direct consideration of the question, What is the work of the Spirit in the Christian man? Briefly defined, his work is to foster the spiritual life. The Spirit secures in the Christian man the increasing realization of the purpose of Christ in his redemption. By his gracious and potent influence, Christian character is deepened and developed. The Christian virtues are the fruit of the Spirit. The enterprises of Christian charity and philanthropy are results of his indwelling in the hearts of men. Christian society itself, with all its multiform institutions and organizations for the betterment of mankind, is a product of the Spirit's power, working in the hearts of men, and leading them on into obedience to the truth of Christ.

When we consider the development of Christian life in the world, it does not seem so strange that Jesus should have declared that in the days of the Spirit greater things than he had done should be accomplished by his disciples. Of course, in saying this, he assumes that these "greater things" are to be done in his name, and in the power of that "other Advocate" who is to carry forward and apply his work. It is as if Jesus had said, "I have planted the seed of a new life in the soil of the world; it will be for my disciples to the end of time to see its growth and to reap its rich fruitage." The principles and laws which he taught and illustrated in his life have been wrought into the thoughts and lives of men by the subtle processes of the Spirit; they have permeated the civilization of the most advanced nations, and have left an indelible impress upon their institutions, their education, and their

whole conception of the meaning and end of life. These are examples of the greater works which belong to the dispensation of the Spirit.

No less wonderful has been the work of the Spirit in elevating and enriching the personal lives of men. The apostolic age presents striking examples. Look at the Apostle Peter. By nature rash, impetuous, and fickle, capable of denying his Lord almost while making protestations of love; capable of an inconsistency with his own principles and conduct which called down upon him the vehement rebuke of Paul; yet see what he became — the rock-apostle upon whom Christ could, in some true sense, build his church, as he said he would. Look at John. Like his fellow-apostles he, at first, looked for an earthly kingdom which should come with pomp and power, and in which the followers of the Messiah should hold high places; he was ready to call down fire from heaven to consume the enemies of his Master. His views of the person and mission of Jesus, and his appreciation of his spiritual truth, seem to have been as defective as were those of his fellow-disciples. Yet this is the man who has given us that interpretation of the gospel which has been aptly called "the heart of Christ." Theologians have generally maintained that John has given us the deepest views of the divine character and the noblest portrayal of the gracious action of God in redemption which are to be found in all Christian literature. No other New Testament writer has risen to such lofty heights of contemplation as has John. This fact found recognition in the ancient church in the title "theologian," or "divine," that was applied to this apostle; and even

more strikingly in the mediæval church which represented the heavenward flight of his spirit by the soaring of the eagle toward the sun. His character and career are a striking fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit. The "things of Christ" were wonderfully shown to him. He reveals an insight into the mind of the Saviour which is unequalled. In his writings are found the fullest description and the loftiest doctrine of the person of Christ which the New Testament anywhere presents. For him the work of Christ is divine, since Christ himself is divine. The whole historic mission of Jesus is grounded in the nature of God, and is as all-embracing in its purpose as the love of God which gave it birth. What folly to seek to explain the matchless splendor of these conceptions apart from the work of the Holy Spirit of truth who unsealed the heavenly secrets of Christ to the mind of his beloved disciple.

One great effect of the Holy Spirit's influence is to elevate and enrich faith. We have seen that the Spirit was to come "in Christ's name," that is, that his whole work was to be in line with Christ's work for men. In accord with this thought we are told that in the day of the Spirit, prayer shall be offered in his name. "Hitherto," said Jesus, "have ye asked nothing in my name" (John xvi. 24). He then proceeds to assure his disciples that in the dispensation of the Spirit they shall ask in his name. It is thus evident that, to the mind of Jesus, prayer "in his name" involved some higher element, and that this element is the result of the gift and illumination of the Spirit. The influence of the Spirit, when received and cherished, so fosters in the Christian man "the mind of Christ," that he is enabled to pray

in accord with the wish and purpose of Christ for him — to hold all his desires and petitions subject to the thought and will of Christ. This, I think, must be prayer in Christ's name; prayer, as we may say, in Christ himself, in his spirit; prayer which seeks first of all, and most of all, what Christ, as the manifestation of the perfect life, is aiming to secure to men.

Essentially the same truth is presented in the teaching that the Spirit will bring to the remembrance of the disciples what Jesus had said to them (John xiv. 26), will guide them into all the truth (John xv. 26), and will glorify Christ by taking of his and declaring it unto them (John xvi. 14, 15). The Spirit's work deepens and completes the work, in the actual lives of men, which is provided for and begun by the historic manifestation of Jesus. Faith in him thus becomes a larger and richer thing through the purifying and elevating influences of the Spirit. There were marked limitations and defects in the faith of the first disciples, which more and more disappeared through the power of the Spirit in their lives. Prejudices faded away, misconceptions were replaced, and misunderstandings vanished under the illumination of the Spirit of truth. Faith became larger and more spiritual. It was purified from the dross of worldly ambition and selfish expectation, and became more and more a high and pure spiritual union with Christ. The defects which were incidental to faith on account of the bodily presence of the Saviour disappeared. Faith became something more than attachment to his human person, and penetrated more deeply into the heart of Christ. Thus it came to rest upon the truest and deepest grounds. What Jesus had

said proved true ; it *was* expedient for the disciples that he should go away, for only by so doing could he open the way to this enlargement and deepening of faith ; only in this way could the veil of sense which prevented them from seeing the deeper things of the gospel be taken away, and their eyes be opened to the larger and clearer vision of the Christ. On this point Archdeacon Hare has well said : "So long as he continued with them, they lived by sight, rather than by faith ; and sight disturbs faith, and shakes it, and weakens it. Sight, as belonging to the world of sense, partakes of its frailties and imperfections. To put forth all its power, faith must be purely and wholly faith." [1]

Another element in the doctrine of the Spirit is that, through the development of Christian life and the elevation of men's ideals, he is to convince the world of its sinfulness and of its need of Christ (John xvi. 8–11). In the presence of the Spirit's work, the world stands convicted of its sin and of its exposure to the divine judgment. In the light which the same divine saving process throws upon history, the work of Christ, and the principles and laws of life which he enthroned, are powerfully vindicated. This is the conviction of the world "concerning righteousness," of which Jesus speaks. This convincing or conviction of the world has thus two sides. Its negative side is the demonstration of the world's sin ; its positive side is the vindication of the Christian ideal of life.

The moral history of mankind is perpetually fulfilling these predictions of Jesus. Imperfectly as the motives and principles of Christ have been embodied in Chris-

1 *The Mission of the Comforter*, p. 140.

tian society, they have demonstrated their divineness and their elevating and transforming power in the life of the world. Christian character and Christian institutions — faulty as they have ever been — have, by their very presence and effects in the world, pronounced the verdict of condemnation upon the principles of selfishness and sordidness which characterize the unchristian world. The righteousness which Christ defined and exemplified — the life of unselfish love — is triumphantly vindicated before the world by its appeal to all that is best in human nature, and by its inherent beauty and beneficent effects wherever it holds sway over the minds and hearts of men. Directly or indirectly, the world is compelled to confess the peerless superiority of Christian righteousness.

This practical acknowledgment by the world of its own sinfulness, and of the excellence and desirableness of the Christian ideal of life, must, I think, become more and more general and explicit, as the achievements of the Spirit in personal life and in society become greater. As civilization advances, as the tone of human life is heightened, and as the grosser elements of human nature are increasingly subjected to the sceptre of reason and love by the power and working of the divine Spirit, the verdict of Christ upon human sinfulness will be reaffirmed and justified, and the conception of life which he presented will shine out with unique and peculiar splendor. It is the part of Christian faith to believe that the movements of the ages are the processes of the Spirit, and that the great enterprises of education and reform, of charity and beneficence, which characterize our time are among the fruits

of those divine influences which mysteriously penetrate our life from God. It is the privilege of Christian hope to believe that these mighty tides of spiritual power will continue to rise and sweep over our world, and that results, in fulfilment of the Saviour's promises, of which we can now but faintly dream, are embraced within the purpose of Almighty Love, and are held in store for our race.

CHAPTER IX

THE FACT OF SIN

In the foregoing studies we have dealt mainly with theology in the narrower sense of that term; that is, with the Christian doctrine of the nature and action of God. We turn now to the doctrine of man. It might be thought that in turning away from the study of God to that of man, we should emerge from a region of mystery and uncertainty into a realm where we could proceed with much confidence and certainty. And this is true in so far as, in this transition, we enter the world of direct personal knowledge and experience. But how soon are the limits of this knowledge reached! A little inquiry suffices to show us that we know too little of ourselves to solve with confidence the problems of our own being. We consequently find that there is not only as great a difference of opinion among scholars in regard to man as in regard to God, but that there are problems quite as perplexing in the realm of anthropology as in that of theology proper.

One side of our human nature we have already considered. We saw that it was a fundamental assumption of Christian teaching that man is morally kindred to God, and that he therefore possesses by his very nature the capacity to know, love, and serve God. But there is another side of human nature upon which

Christianity lays great stress — man is sinful. Our religion constantly assumes the fact of sin. The procedure of God in revealing himself to men is determined by the fact of sin. Christ came into the world to save sinners. The Christian gospel is a message and means of salvation from sin. That gospel would certainly be a very different thing from what it now is, were it not for the presence of sin in the world.

Many theologians hold that sin was the sole occasion of Christ's coming into the world. Others suppose that, even apart from sin, there would have been so great a need, on man's part, of such a revelation of God as we have in Christ, as to make it reasonable to believe that the incarnation would have taken place. No one, of course, can give a certain answer to such a problem. I can conceive of reasons why Christ should have come into the world, even if sin had not invaded human life; but I cannot imagine that, if such had been the case, some of the most significant elements of our present Christianity would be in existence. The experiences of Christ would necessarily have been very different. His death, had it taken place, could not have happened at the hands of sinners and for sin. Whatever we may think in regard to what might have been, it is certain that God's action in redemption through Christ has been directed and shaped in view of sin, and that the fact of sin is therefore very fundamental in that whole view of the world and of human life which Christianity presupposes.

I have purposely taken as the title of this chapter "The Fact of Sin." I mean by this expression to intimate that what is practically important is to see how

Christianity regards the actual sinfulness of men. It is less essential to frame a formal definition of sin, or to adopt a theory of its origin, than it is to discern the Christian view of its inner nature and effects.

Most Christian thinkers now agree that the word "selfishness" best describes the nature of sin. Sin is the assertion of the human will against the divine. In scriptural language it is the "transgression of the law," or "lawlessness" (1 John iii. 4). This violation of the divine law is of the nature of selfishness in the most comprehensive sense of that term. As all virtue consists in harmony with the "good and holy and acceptable will of God," so all moral evil consists in disharmony with God's will. Now, since the moral nature of God is love, all goodness is comprehended in love or in likeness to God. In like manner, all sin is comprehended in the opposite of love, which is selfishness.

It may not seem evident at first thought that selfishness is the opposite of love. When, however, we consider that love in man consists in the supreme choice of God as the object of his desire and service, it appears that sin consists in the choice of self instead of God. Sin is self-will in some of its forms, and leads inevitably to self-righteousness and self-glorification. Love seeks to secure our own true good and the true good of all other men, by desiring and striving to promote obedience and likeness to God. Selfishness wilfully breaks away from God, and seeks its own gratification and indulgence. Selfishness is, therefore, radically different from self-love. Jesus assumes in his teaching that men ought to love themselves. They are accord-

ingly commanded to love their neighbors *as themselves.* Love of self is not only right in itself, but it is so necessary that without it love of others would be quite impossible. Self-love, in the true sense of the word love, is the choice and pursuit of one's own best good in accord with the will of God, which is ever ruled by love. Selfishness, on the contrary, ignores God, and finds its only law in man's own will and pleasure.

It is now readily seen how self-love differs from selfishness. They differ chiefly in the objects which they seek. Selfishness seeks to further personal ends which are not connected with the true interests of life, or which, at least, are not so sought and pursued as to further those interests. Selfishness operates in the sphere of the inferior concerns of life. It aims at self-gratification, rather than self-discipline; at ends that terminate on self, rather than at those which, in turn, become means for the benefit of others as well as self. Self-love and selfishness may, in certain cases, seek the same objects; but they seek them with such different motives, and in such a different spirit, that the two qualities are most clearly distinguished. Suppose two men are seeking the same office or position. The altogether predominant, perhaps exclusive, thought of one is that the position will bring to him some personal distinction and benefits which he can enjoy with and for himself. He sees the place and all the opportunities connected with it only as related to his own comfort, or the gratification of his personal ambition. This is the temper of selfishness. Another man makes an equally earnest effort for the place. But his thought of it is

that it is a post of usefulness, a position of influence. It gives personal distinction, to which he is not insensible; but what is far more and better, it gives opportunities for service, for the development of the man's own character, and thus for the exertion of wide and good influence. This man has his own interests at heart too; but in how different a way! And what a different range of interests is uppermost in his mind! He has self-love, because he strives to put himself where he can be the most of a man possible, and do his best work; but his interest in himself, being of the nature of real *love*, cannot aim chiefly at the lower ends, or stop with the consideration of mere personal aims, but necessarily goes out to embrace other lives, and tends constantly upward toward the lofty ideal of Jesus, the making of others the objects of as eager an interest as that which we ought to feel in our own true welfare. Who can doubt that, in the two cases supposed, there would be a world-wide difference in the ways in which these men would administer and use the position so sought, and in the personal influence which they would exert in it?

With what different motives and spirit are men doing the same tasks all around us! After all, it is the ends which they have in view which make the greatest difference in the lives of men. Two men make money side by side at the same counter. What different things that money-making means to them! To one it means selfishness; to the other love, — self-love, no doubt, but also love to others, for self-love never goes alone. Self-love, from its very nature, involves and leads to love for others; since we soon find that we

cannot seek and promote our true well-being in isolation from others. Selfishness is the principle of isolation; love is the principle of society. Its motto is, "We are members one of another."

There is a radical difference between these two qualities. Selfishness belittles life and narrows the world by making the individual the measure of all things; self-love ennobles life by making the individual a part of a social order, in which men have mutual rights and duties, and are bound together by common interests. Thus selfishness drags the world down to its own little measure, while self-love lifts the individual up upon the plane of universal human interests, and becomes the inspiration to doing unto others as we should wish others to do unto us. And all love, whether to self or to others, has its source and spring in our moral kinship to God, and its only perfect norm in the love of him who made us in his own image, and made us for himself.

Sin is a perversion — a perversion of the will from its true harmony with the will of God, and a consequent perversion of the whole character. Sin is disharmony with the divine order; it is failure on man's part to realize the true idea of his nature and destiny. It is significant that the root meaning of the biblical words for sin is — *missing the mark.* They suggest that sin is failure, misdirected effort, perverted choice and action. It follows from this conception that sin does not belong to human nature *as such;* it is alien to the original, divine idea of man. It arises only from the perverse use of human powers. The narrative of creation in Genesis asserts that all the works of God — including man — were, in their divine idea and constitution,

"very good." "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31).

The theory has been widely held that sin is an incident of man's finiteness; that it is a name for the metaphysical imperfection of human nature. The tendency of this view is to ascribe to sin a purely negative character; to make it a mere absence of good. In this view sin consists only in imperfection, ignorance, or mistake. It is an inevitable accompaniment of moral development. The very idea of progress in goodness implies the existence, at any given point in the process, of imperfection or sin. The cure for sin, then, is enlightenment or culture. To substantially this conclusion many current theories of evolution inevitably lead. Sin is incidental to man's moral development out of savagery into civilization and culture. It is the survival in human nature of the animal impulses and passions which have not yet been eliminated in the process of moral evolution. This view easily allies itself with the theory that sin is inherent in the body or flesh. Some Christian theologians have adopted this opinion, and have sought to defend it on biblical grounds. The Apostle Paul frequently speaks of the flesh as contrary to man's better part, the spirit or reason, and describes it as a sinful power or principle. At first sight the view appears very plausible that Paul regarded sin as consisting in the impulses and passions of the flesh. This was a method of thought concerning sin which was current in Greek philosophy; and some scholars have, with considerable plausibility, sought to prove that Paul adopted it and elaborated it in his epistles.

A close analysis of his teaching on this point, however, will suffice to show that the apostle distinguishes between sin and the flesh, despite the fact that he does so closely associate them. The course of his thought on the subject, so far as we can trace it in his epistles, seems to have been something like this: The flesh is — as so commonly represented in the Old Testament — a symbol of man's weakness, both physical and moral. Viewing it as a symbol of moral weakness, it naturally stands for those impulses, appetites, and passions which reside in the body. In a conspicuous degree do these impulses act as occasions and incentives to sin. Thus sin may be said to have its special seat and sphere of manifestation in the flesh. In this way sin and the flesh are closely allied, and may, within certain limits, be spoken of as synonymous. "The flesh" becomes a name for man's unrenewed nature in general, because the sinful man is one in whom the natural desires, rather than the spiritual nature, are dominant. Sin is not, however, with Paul strictly synonymous with the flesh. Sin dwells in the flesh, it thrives in the soil of carnal appetites and inclinations, but it is itself distinguishable from the flesh. Its origin is not in the flesh, and in its essential nature it does not pertain to it. It has its origin in the will, and its seat in the permanent preferences which are the result of the will's action. The Apostle Paul, and the Bible generally, treat sin, not as a *physical*, but as a *voluntary* affair. Sin belongs to the realm of action, choice, and character.

It is impossible to reconcile the Christian doctrine of sin with any pantheistic theory which regards moral

evil as a metaphysical imperfection, or with any evolutionary philosophy which treats it as a defect incidental to the development of the race. The divergence between these views of sin and that which pervades the Bible does not relate merely or mainly to the doctrine of the fall, but to the nature and guilt of sin viewed as a matter of history and experience. According to the Bible, the correlative of sin is *guilt.* If sin is a mere privation of good, if it is mere mistake, misconception, or natural imperfection, there need be, there can be, no sense of guilt on account of it. Christ and the biblical writers, however, teach that sin is guilty, and that the human conscience attests its guilt. The sense of blameworthiness on account of sin may, of course, be relatively obscured; but the very fact that the feeling of guilt asserts itself when the conscience is allowed its normal utterance, is proof that guilt is the natural concomitant of sin. The confessions of sin throughout the Bible breathe language which springs from the sense of guilt. The prodigal son did not merely acknowledge misapprehension and mistake. His language was: "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke xv. 18).

Every prayer for forgiveness involves a confession of the guilt of sin. The very idea of the divine mercy or grace involves as its correlative the blameworthiness of mankind. The publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke xviii. 13), couples together in their inseparable relations the idea of God as merciful and of sin as guilty. One further illustration may be drawn from the Psalmist's prayer and confession: —

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness:
According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my transgressions:
And my sin is ever before me.
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in thy sight:
That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,
And be clear when thou judgest (Ps. li. 1–4).

To the guilt which attaches to sin, the common consciousness of mankind, as well as the Bible, bears witness. It finds ample recognition in literature. I will adduce two or three illustrations. Victor Hugo, in *Les Misérables*,[1] pauses in the midst of his narrative to take a glance into the conscience of Jean Valjean. He says: "There is nothing more terrifying than this species of contemplation. The mental eye can nowhere find greater brilliancy or greater darkness than within man; it cannot dwell on anything which is more formidable, complicated, mysterious, or infinite. There is a spectacle grander than the ocean, and that is the conscience; there is a spectacle grander than the sky, and it is the interior of the soul." Hugo proceeds to describe the efforts of Valjean to escape the terrors of remorse which darkened his soul: "He rose from his chair and bolted the door. He was afraid lest something might enter, and he barricaded himself against the possible. A moment later, he blew out his light, for it annoyed him, and he fancied that he might be overseen. By whom? Alas, what he wanted to keep out had entered; what he wished to blind was looking at him! It was his con-

[1] Ch. li. A Tempest in a Brain.

science, that is to say, God." Commenting on this experience, our author adds: "It is no more possible to prevent thought from reverting to an idea than it is to prevent the sea from returning to the shore. With the sailor this is called the tide, with the guilty it is called remorse; God upheaves the soul as well as the ocean."

The many powerful passages in which Shakespeare illustrates the saying which he puts into the mouth of Hamlet, that "conscience does make cowards of us all," are doubtless familiar to the reader. I will quote but one. Macbeth, led on by "vaulting ambition," has accomplished the murder of Duncan. When the deed is done, he finds, as he had feared, that "even-handed justice commends the ingredients of his poisoned chalice to his own lips." Afterward in his chamber in company with Lady Macbeth he hears a knocking and exclaims: —

> Whence is that knocking?
> How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
> What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes.
> Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
> Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
> The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
> Making the green one red.[1]

The fact that sin pertains to the will involves the conclusion that sin does not consist merely of isolated sinful acts. There is such a thing as a state of sinfulness, a sinful character. Jesus taught that in God's sight a man may be guilty of murder, even if he does not commit the overt act. Hate is the essence of mur-

[1] *Macbeth*, Act ii., Scene 2.

der, as lust is the essence of unchastity. Christian teaching accords with the verdict of the human conscience in affirming that sin inheres in the character, in the disposition. Out of the sinful heart are the issues of the sinful life in specific evil acts. The philosopher Kant said: "Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a good will." [1] If this statement is true, its converse must also be true, that nothing can be called evil without qualification, except an evil will.

It is the fact that sin inheres in the will, and thus has its seat in the character, which lends such great significance to the law and power of habit. We may define habit as the facility which comes from the frequent repetition of an action. The law of habit, then, means that the oftener a given moral action is repeated, the greater becomes the facility with which it is done, and the greater the inclination to do it. This law is a beneficent one, since it holds as well with regard to good actions as to evil. The law of habit helps the good man as much as it harms the bad man. It is not the law which is to blame for men's sins; it is the way in which men, by evil choices and actions, permit the law to confirm them in the commission of sin. "The facility with which we commit sin," says Augustine, "is a punishment for sins already committed." This is but to say that every evil choice or action passes into character, and makes its contribution to our permanent preferences. The most terrible penalty of sin is the sinful character which sin engenders. The

[1] T. K. Abbott's edition of Kant's *Theory of Ethics*, page 9.

most fearful consequences of sin are its moral consequences in the life of him who commits it.

It is the operation of the law of evil habit which creates what is called in theology "moral inability" to choose and do the right. The deeper one descends into the sinful life, the less desirous and the less able is he to return from it. Evil habit multiplies its power over the sinner as the banyan-tree strengthens its hold upon the earth. This tree drops its roots from its branches as well as from its trunk. These strike into the ground until every limb is held as with a rod of iron. Many of these roots grow until they at length become as large as the original trunk, which thus becomes lost in the multitude of new growths. Once the tree might have been transplanted with ease; but who could uproot and remove the tangled forest which it has at length become? It is thus that evil habit expands itself, and strengthens its sway over the whole scope of human activities and powers, until at length every faculty is held within its grasp, and the work of change becomes next to impossible. Every evil choice is one more blow of the hammer by which the soul forges the chains of evil thought and habit which bind it to earthliness and sin.

But it may be asked, Does this "moral inability," which evil habit induces, mean the loss of free will? It means the fixity of the will in a certain direction or line of action. There is nothing outside the will of the worst of men which is compelling him to go on in his evil courses; it is his own fixed choice; it is the character which is in his own will which is urging him forward. The will of man is free within

the limits of its own state. The best of men is free to commit the worst crime so far as any preventing cause outside himself is concerned. When we say *he cannot*, we mean *he will not*. His will is so confirmed in goodness that we rightly say it is morally impossible for him to do the evil act in question. The case is similar with the wicked man. His will, by a long course of wrong choice and action, has practically restricted its own moral liberty. Desire for the good is so weakened that the will spontaneously takes a wrong direction. This truth, concerning the power of evil habit to confirm the will in a given course of action, and to weaken the motives which would incline it to pursue the contrary course, Whittier has strikingly depicted in his poem entitled *The Answer*, two stanzas of which I quote: —

> Forever round the Mercy-seat
> The guiding lights of Love shall burn;
> But what if, habit-bound, thy feet
> Shall lack the will to turn?
>
> What if thine eyes refuse to see,
> Thine ear to Heaven's free welcome fail,
> And thou a willing captive be,
> Thyself thy own dark jail?

We have now reviewed the main points in the Christain doctrine of sin. I apprehend that with the statements thus far made most Christian thinkers would substantially agree. The Christian consciousness recognizes sin as guilty; that is, as incurring the divine displeasure, and as needing the divine forgiveness. It recognizes that sin is more than the sum of specific

sins ; that it pervades the whole character, and corrupts the springs of motive and feeling. When, however, we pass beyond the more obvious teaching of Scripture and the common verdict of experience on these and allied points, we find little agreement among theologians. Concerning the origin of sin, its relation to the fall of Adam described in Genesis, its relation to the nature which we bring with us into the world, and the manner in which it spreads itself abroad among mankind, the widest differences of theory prevail. We might leave out of view all these questions on the ground that our purpose contemplates the study of our various themes chiefly from the standpoint of Christian experience. It will be useful, however, to enter into the consideration of them far enough to make it apparent that they stand on quite different grounds from those facts of life on which the elements of the doctrine of sin thus far described are seen to rest.

I shall first briefly describe the two historic theories which have prevailed in Calvinistic theology respecting what is called "original sin ;" that is, the native or inherited sinfulness of mankind. The first theory to be noticed is that which was elaborated by Augustine (354–430) under the influence of Neoplatonic philosophy. It maintains that all men are guilty for Adam's sin because all men committed it. All mankind was seminally present in Adam, and therefore sinned when he sinned. Human nature had not yet been distributed into individuals. Adam was the race, and hence the race sinned in him. Human nature in its totality is therefore sinful and guilty. One of the maxims of this theory is, "Sin is a nature, and that nature is

guilt." The principal American treatises on doctrinal theology which advocate this theory are those of Dr. W. G. T. Shedd and Dr. A. H. Strong. The second theory to be noticed had its origin in Holland in the seventeenth century, and is called the Federal or Covenant theory. This theory denies that all men really participated in Adam's sin, and maintains that, according to a covenant with Adam, God made him the representative of mankind in general, and that Adam, therefore, was to stand or fall for the race. He fell, and the guilt of his fall is therefore imputed to those whom he represented. In this view men did not sin in Adam actually, but only putatively or representatively. The principal defenders of this theory in this country are the Princeton theologians.

A distinguished German theologian, Dr. Julius Müller (1801–1878), in a masterly treatise on the Christian doctrine of sin, has propounded a different theory of man's native sinfulness. He laid down the following principles: Guilt can only attach to personal sin; it cannot be *inherited*; it cannot be *imputed*. At the same time, we must hold to the organic unity of the race; and all are sinful and guilty, as a matter of fact, and that from the very beginning of moral action. Where, then, is that wrong self-determination of all to be found in which guilt took its rise? Augustine answers, in Adam; but his descendants had no personal, conscious existence in Adam, and therefore could not responsibly choose and act in him. This answer cannot establish the existence in Adam of that self-decision which is the necessary basis of guilt. The Federal theory answers, Guilt is not correlative to self-deter-

mination, but to God's imputation; but this view obscures the very nature of guilt, and directly violates our first principle, that guilt attaches only to personal transgression. Müller concludes that we can only explain the universality and the guilt of sin by supposing that men existed in some previous state of being in which they sinned, and from which, therefore, they brought a corrupt nature into the world. To most persons this theory will seem like carrying the problem to the utmost bounds of thought, and throwing it over into the abyss of absolute mystery.

The New England theologians also devoted themselves energetically to this problem. They elaborated the view that by virtue of their race-connection with Adam all men had inherited a corruption or depravation of nature, which, however, could not be called, in the strict sense, sinful, and on account of which alone men were not condemned. They recognized the principle of heredity as affecting the moral life, but held that men were not responsible or guilty for inherited tendency, but only for their own personal, voluntary action. This theory involved the denial that infant children were sinners, and were objects of God's wrath from the very moment of birth.

It is beyond my purpose to discuss these theories; since they do not, for the most part, belong to the Christian doctrine of sin considered as a matter of experience. My object in referring to them is to make it appear that the Christian and scriptural doctrine concerning real sin as known in experience, and as everywhere operative in human life, is to be broadly distinguished from these discordant and unverifiable

speculations respecting "original sin" and "native depravity." I will only add the following suggestions in regard to them: —

1. There is very little in Scripture which, on any method of interpretation, can be made to bear upon these theories; and it may well be doubted whether, on a critical and historical view of Scripture, there is any teaching therein respecting "original sin." The theories which have been current in the church all rest upon the assumption that the narrative of the first sin in Genesis is strictly historical. Biblical criticism, however, has rendered this supposition more than doubtful. The legends of the early chapters of Genesis are widely different from historical narratives; and their meaning is to be found, not by regarding them as history, but by observing the general religious conceptions which they embody and symbolize. But even if theology continues to regard these stories as history, there is little scriptural support for any doctrine of original sin. The principal proof-texts are: "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22); "As through one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," etc. (Rom. v. 12 *sq.*); and, "And were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Eph. ii. 3).[1] The context shows that the last of these passages refers, not to inherited sinfulness as such, but to sinfulness which had been acquired through actual disobedience. The second passage refers, I believe, to a sinning of all men when Adam sinned, but in a figurative sense, as all Christians are said to have been cruci-

[1] For a critical consideration of these passages I would refer the reader to my *Pauline Theology, in loco.*

fied with Christ. The first passage, no doubt, assumes a natural relation of sinful humanity with Adam, but neither states nor implies anything as to the nature of that relation.

2. There is a great and mysterious *fact* which the various theories of "original sin," seek to interpret, — a race-connection, by virtue of which the individual shares in the physical and moral consequences of the life of his progenitors. This fact the Bible recognizes. The passages in which it is recognized theology has commonly interpreted in accord with preconceived theories respecting God and the world. It has thus far taken little account of the natural law of heredity, concerning which science has taught us so much in recent years. "Original sin" has been chiefly studied by theologians as a matter of pure theory. An acute critic, himself an accomplished theologian, reviewing one of the ablest and most famous of our "bodies of divinity," expresses his regret that its author "borrows so little from the scientific discoveries of our age to confirm the teachings of the Bible. In fact [continues the reviewer], he seems to prefer theology pure and simple to theology allied with science. The teachings of the Bible, interpreted by his own exegesis, are more conclusive to him than the same truths interpreted and buttressed by natural laws."[1]

The transmission of sinful tendencies is a mystery which there is no reason to believe that human wisdom will ever be able to resolve; but I believe that much more light will yet be thrown upon it by the study of

[1] From an article entitled "Original Sin and Evolution," by Professor Heman Lincoln in *The Independent*, Sept. 2, 1880.

the natural laws of heredity, than it has hitherto received from centuries of *a priori* speculation and equally *a priori* exegesis. Even if the study of heredity should finally teach us but little concerning the mystery, the little which it does teach will have the advantage of agreeing — so far as it goes — with the facts of life. I do not believe that what we shall learn from actual observation and experience, that is, from the study of God's action in natural law, will serve to baffle all rational interpretation, and to perplex our moral intuitions, as do the theories that we come into the world under the curse of God on account of a sin which we committed centuries before we were born, or that God condemns us for the sin of a representative in whose selection we had no share.

CHAPTER X

THE ATONEMENT

The doctrine of the atonement is the correlate of the doctrine of sin. But for the fact of sin, there could be no atonement. It follows that the conception which one entertains concerning sin will powerfully affect his notions of atonement. If sin is merely an incident of man's moral development, if it is a mere defect or imperfection which is due to our finiteness or imprisonment in the flesh, there can be no atonement for it. Unless sin involves guilt, it requires no atonement, since it requires no forgiveness. The word "atonement" denotes the method of God's action in providing for the forgiveness of sin. Any theory, therefore, which eliminates from sin the element of guilt renders forgiveness unnecessary, and logically involves a denial of atonement.

There is another conception which must always strongly influence the doctrine of atonement; that is, the idea of God. A glance at the religions of the world serves to show that the conception of the Deity which is cherished by any people powerfully affects all their thoughts respecting the way in which his favor is to be procured, and the way in which he manifests that favor toward mankind. The same principle holds true in Christianity. If, for example, it

be said that God's nature is primarily strict and unbending justice, so that he must mete out to all sin its full desert of penalty, then when it is asked, How does he provide for the forgiveness of sin? the answer must be, By inflicting upon a substitute for man the full penalty due the world's sin. In this view, God *must* punish sin. He cannot forgive it until he has first punished it. If, then, he is not to punish, but to forgive it, in the case of the men who have committed it, he must punish it vicariously in a substitute who takes the place of sinful man and endures his punishment.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the divine nature be conceived as benevolence. In that case, nothing will be said of expiation or of the satisfaction of divine justice in order to forgiveness. The atonement will be treated as a method which God adopts for reconciling man to himself by a special exhibition of his mercy, and by furnishing special motives to men to repent and forsake their sins. The first theory, built on the conception of retributive justice as the fundamental attribute of God, speaks constantly of Christ as enduring the penalty of human sin and thereby appeasing the wrath of God. Its great words are — expiation, satisfaction, penal suffering, etc. The second view, proceeding from the perpetual willingness of God to forgive sin, speaks of the vicarious love and sympathy of Christ, and of God as winning mankind to himself through this consummate revelation of his eternal goodness.

I have briefly sketched these two conceptions of the redeeming work of Christ in order to show how the

idea of God necessarily colors and moulds our notions of atonement. This fact will illustrate the assertion which was made in an earlier chapter, that nothing is so important in all Christian thinking as a correct conception of the character of God. In its application to our present subject the idea of God which is cherished makes all the difference between the view that God's wrath was appeased, and that he was made willing to forgive sin through the endurance by Christ in man's stead of the full penalty of human sin, and the view that the work of Christ is, not the removal of an obstacle in the divine mind to the forgiveness of sin, but a proclamation that there is not, and never was, such an obstacle.

Leaving aside for the present these illustrations, let us endeavor to see what the import of the doctrine of the atonement really is. Let us take as our starting-point the truth that God is love. This love, which is a name for the moral nature of God, includes in its essence the two elements of self-communication and self-preservation. The impulse to give and to bless we call benevolence; the impulse to maintain the uprightness or dignity of the divine nature we call righteousness. Benevolence is the self-impartation; righteousness is the self-respect of perfect love. Both are equally essential in love; both are, therefore, equally fundamental in God. Any effort to exalt one to the disparagement of the other involves a perversion, and mars the conception of the divine perfectness. A synthesis of the qualities which these two complementary concepts include is absolutely essential in theology. When the process of analysis is carried so far as to

separate elements of character in whose absolute unity and harmony the very perfection of God consists, one-sided and extreme theories are sure to be the result. When, for example, it is said that justice is *the* fundamental attribute of God (meaning that benevolence is less fundamental in his nature), the way is opened for the treatment of all the themes of theology from the standpoint of a purely legal conception of the divine nature and action. The extremes to which this tendency has been carried may be seen in the legalism of the late Jewish theology, and in the more extreme forms of Protestant hyper-orthodoxy. No less one-sided are the results of the opposite position. When the love of God is conceived of as mere good-nature, the whole system of Christian doctrine is emasculated; sin is really blameworthy no longer; the wrath of God against impiety and injustice disappears.

God is absolutely holy, righteous, or just. Were he, at any moment, or in any degree, unrighteous, he would not be God. All that he does is righteously done. If he punishes, he punishes righteously; if he forgives, he forgives in strict accord with righteousness, and in a way which manifests and vindicates his righteousness. So also is God perfectly benevolent. It is not optional with him to be benevolent or not. He can no more cease to be benevolent than he can cease to exist. His goodness is as fundamental in his essence as it is eternal. I can no more think of God as choosing for an instant not to be benevolent or merciful, than I can think of the abrogation of the moral law or the extinction of God himself. "His mercy endureth forever." Any theology which denies this principle

(and whole systems have been built upon a denial of it) issues in a monstrous caricature of God.

These considerations are of the utmost importance in their bearing upon the doctrine of atonement. The idea that the justice of God is more fundamental in his nature than his love, yields, as I have already pointed out, a very different conception of the work of redemption from that which flows from the theory that justice and benevolence are equally essential in God. On this latter view the motive of the atonement is found in that fundamental and changeless benevolence which is an element of the divine perfection. It appears to me to be very difficult, on the other theory, to give any rational account of the origin of the atonement. If mercy is only a secondary and subordinate attribute of God, how should it ever so far prevail over inflexible justice as to lead to the adoption of any plan of grace for the salvation of sinners? Why should not sheer justice, which on the theory in question is absolutely central and determining in the ethical character of God, take its course and punish the sinful world without mercy? The theory answers, that God did punish the world *vicariously* in Christ. But why not the guilty world itself, which seems more consonant with general justice? The only answer is, that God *graciously* chose to pursue a course which looked toward man's salvation. And thus mercy is at last brought in and made to determine the policy of God. No other motive for salvation is conceivable.

Thus the attribute to which is assigned a secondary place in God's *nature* asserts itself as primary in his *action*. No theory which remands the mercy of God to

the background can carry out its assumptions with logical consistency in application to the actual provision of God for the salvation of sinners. The work of atonement springs out of God's nature; and since it can originate only in his grace, his grace must be a fundamental element of his nature.

It is, indeed, of the utmost importance to maintain that God must always be just, but it is of equal importance to determine what is the nature of his justice. One view is that the essence of divine justice is retribution; it is the *quid pro quo* element of God's being which necessarily repays all sin with a full and adequate penalty. This view of justice is commonly associated with the theory that justice is *the* essential attribute of God. In this view God must punish sin; he must punish every sin with its full *quantum* of penalty. If he does not thus punish it in the case of the person committing it, he must do so vicariously; and this he does in Christ, who bore the accumulated penalty of the whole world's sin. The arm of almighty vengeance is lifted, and the penal stroke must descend. If it is not to descend on man, some substitute must step into man's place and receive it upon his own head. This Christ did. In this view, God's justice is a quality which necessitates punishment, and which precludes forgiveness until it has been appeased by punishing. In this view of justice, Christ was punished with the full penalty of all human sin. It will readily be seen how this view of the nature of divine justice logically involves the idea that justice is primary in God. Justice of this sort is, indeed, essentially incompatible with mercy, and it may well be doubted whether it logically

leaves even a subordinate place for mercy in the divine character.

Another view of divine justice makes it the reaction of God's holy nature against sin. It is an element of the divine love. It is the rightness, the uprightness, of his nature which, by its very nature, involves his holy displeasure against all sin. But it does not follow that he must, in every case, punish sin; or, in other words, it does not follow that he cannot forgive without first punishing sin. God's righteousness exists, and is exercised in conjunction with his benevolence. In favor of this view we may appeal from mere *a priori*, abstract definitions to all practical human experience of goodness among men. The moral sense of mankind would repudiate the idea that the ideally just or righteous man was the man of whose moral life and action mere strict retribution was the maxim. Shylock will never become a favorite character among men. The rigid dogmas and definitions of theology on this subject relax when we bring them into the light and warmth of men's practical judgment and feeling. Men commonly believe — and they ought to believe — that real goodness consists of a combination of justice and mercy; and most men rightly refuse to believe that justice in God is something utterly different from justice in man. I freely admit that it is not possible to define justice in this general sense so clearly and sharply as it can be defined in the merely penal or retributive meaning; but the ease and simplicity with which some ideas may be defined are often due to the onesidedness with which they are viewed, and the arbitrariness with which they are theoretically separated from that with which, in all

life and experience, they are essentially and inseparably conjoined. This is true in the case under consideration. Facility of definition is one of the faultiest tests of truth. It assumes a simplicity and a separateness of qualities and relations which are quite contrary to all that we actually know of God from revelation, or of man from experience. The definition of divine justice as mere, sheer retribution untempered by mercy belongs to the theologian's book; it is foreign to the moral sense and the common judgments of mankind.

In the view of God's nature for which I have expressed a preference, atonement would be a revelation of God's total character in his dealing with sinful men. It is not the work of one part of his nature to satisfy another part, since God was never divided against himself; nor should the distinguishable aspects of his perfection ever be thought of as separate and as acting independently. In atonement God reveals, realizes, vindicates, and satisfies himself — his whole indivisible nature — in the treatment of sin. Atonement is an operation of God's love, which is a name for his total perfection. The atonement is a satisfaction to God's nature, but to his *whole* nature — to his benevolence as well as to his righteousness. It is God's self-satisfaction in a method of action in redemption which reveals and vindicates his holy love. God can be "satisfied" in no other sense. He can be satisfied only by expressing in action his glorious and holy perfections, and by realizing in the universe the ends which accord with his own will and nature. The atonement, whatever it is specifically, must be God's work in his relation to sinful men; not the work of some third party ac-

complished *ab extra* upon God. It springs from the heart of God and is its consummate and most adequate expression.

The atonement, then, bears an essential relation alike to the benevolence and to the righteousness of God. It has its motive and spring in the former, and it reveals and vindicates the latter. It is in regard to this second relation of the atonement that the principal differences of theory among theologians have arisen. Before entering more specifically upon the doctrine of the atonement as actually accomplished in Christ, let us note that the general conception for which atonement stands is the divine self-consistency in forgiveness. The necessity of atonement lies in the fact that, if God forgives, he must forgive in a way which shall, at the same time, express and vindicate his holy displeasure at sin. The central idea in atonement is the disclosure and vindication of God's righteousness in connection with the provision for forgiveness.

The atonement does not make God willing to forgive sin; it shows at once how willing he is, and, at the same time, how unchangeably holy. If God had ever been unwilling to forgive sin, no atonement could ever have been provided. It was because God has always been willing to forgive sin that he provides atonement whereby his sovereign grace and his inviolable holiness are at once expressed and satisfied in forgiveness. The biblical doctrine of atonement is broadly distinguished from the notions which are found in heathen authors in regard to appeasing their divinities by gifts and sacrifices. The Bible never speaks of propitiating God. The idea of creating in him a disposition to show him-

self favorable to mankind is utterly inconsistent with the biblical doctrine of God. The problem of atonement is not how God is in any way essentially changed in his nature or character, for in these respects he is changeless; the problem is to show how God in redeeming sinful men acts out of his whole nature, which includes righteous indignation against sin.

The biblical doctrine of atonement is, that there is an obstacle to forgiveness in the divine nature, which consists, not in unwillingness to forgive, but in that essential righteousness which so conditions the divine grace that, without its satisfaction, God cannot, in self-consistency, forgive. Atonement enables God consistently with his holiness actually to do what he was never unwilling to do. The action of God in relation to sin and forgiveness is not a matter of mere arbitrary will or disposition, since the will of God must be conceived as always acting in accord with his essential nature. In providing atonement, therefore, God fulfils a condition of the operation of that grace in which the whole work of salvation has its origin and ground.

Thus far I have spoken mainly of the idea of atonement in the abstract. The concrete expression of the biblical doctrine is, that in the humiliation, sufferings, and death of Christ, God has so manifested, vindicated, and satisfied his changeless, essential righteousness, and has so met the ends of punishment in the assertion of his holy displeasure at sin, that he can consistently forgive sin without punishing it. In other words, God, in his mercy, adopts another mode of action in reference to sin than that of punishment. He substitutes for the punishment which is due to sin another method of

vindicating sin's desert of punishment, thereby meeting the end of punishment. He did not substitute Christ for us *in punishment*, for the punishment of an innocent person is a contradiction in terms. He graciously substituted for punishment another method of procedure, which was not punishment, but which served the purpose which punishment would have accomplished, namely, the expression of the divine righteousness. I believe that this is the true sense of substitution. It is not the substitution of Christ's punishment for ours; it is the remission of punishment altogether, and the substitution in its place of another method of revealing and vindicating the holy displeasure of God against sin. This is the import of Paul's most explicit and significant assertion on the subject (Rom. iii. 25, 26).[1]

How, now, can it be shown that Christ met the ends of punishment, and thus atoned for sin? What was there in his sufferings and death which gave them this significance and effect? It appears to me that the New Testament writers continually presuppose and frequently teach that such was the fact. It is equally clear that they do not explain the *rationale* of the fact. Here, then, is room for the greatest variety of theory and conjecture. I do not think that the human mind can fully solve the mystery, but certain suggestions may be made in regard to the direction which thought on the subject should take.

The eternal Son of God left the glory of heaven, came down to earth, and humbled himself by taking on him our human nature. He identified himself

[1] For a critical consideration of this passage, see my *Pauline Theology*, pp. 235–240.

with man in his sinful and suffering lot as far as a sinless person could. In so doing he came into the liveliest sense of man's sinfulness, and into the profoundest possible participation in the misery of mankind in consequence of sin. Though personally sinless, he endured, by his identification of himself with sinful men, the penal consequences of sin through the vivid realization of human guilt. He could not, indeed, feel God's displeasure at himself personally, because he remained throughout the period of his incarnation what he had ever been, — God's beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. His sense of the ill desert of sin, and his realization of its guilt, were vicariously endured through his identification of himself with man. The vicariousness of the Saviour's sufferings was the vicariousness of love.

The absolute purity of Christ would make his realization of the guilt of sin the more acute, and his suffering under a sense of its guilt the more intense. His suffering with and for sinful man represents the wound which sin inflicts upon the divine love. It is the agony of the heart of God over sin. What else could so testify to its heinousness? What else could so proclaim and vindicate the holy displeasure which God must ever feel toward sin, and the righteousness of the penalties which belong to it in the moral order of the world? The sufferings which Christ endured in his humiliation testify, on the one hand, to the divine love and condescension, and, on the other, to the guilt of sin and its just condemnation, because they show what sin truly and essentially is, — an affront to absolute goodness. The treatment which Christ endured at the hands of

sinners reveals, as nothing else could, the dark depths of human sinfulness, and remains to all time the supreme vindication of God's wrath against it.

The ends of punishment are met by Christ's vicarious sufferings, because they reveal, even more fully than punishment would do, the guilt of sin, and vindicate God's righteousness in condemning it. The atonement thus represents the self-consistency of God in the manifestation of that righteousness which necessarily conditions the operation of the divine grace. Instead of expressing his disapproval of sin by punishment, God graciously substitutes for punishment another course of action expressing that disapproval. In the work of Christ the whole nature of God, his goodness and his severity alike, is manifested and satisfied. The work of Christ shows us, in a series of historic transactions, how sin affects God; how he has always felt and acted in view of it, and discloses the grounds of that feeling and action.

At this point the question naturally arises, Is not the death of Jesus the one great saving deed? and, if so, how can he be conceived as saving men in all ages and lands? Is not salvation grounded in a historic transaction which took place on a certain day about 1900 years ago? But let us ask, How were Abraham and Moses, David and Isaiah, saved? Shall we say, By the Old Testament sacrifices? But the New Testament declares that it is impossible that such sacrifices should take away sin (Heb. x. 4). Shall we then say, By a prophetic faith in Christ to come? But this view involves the admission that a saving deed can save in advance of its accomplishment, and would logically carry

us to a larger conception of the atonement than that which limits it to a single transaction, — the death of Jesus on the cross.

What conception, then, shall we adopt? To limit the atonement strictly to the death of Jesus on the cross would exclude from salvation all who, in the centuries that have since elapsed, have not heard and accepted of it. If, however, we hold that any persons outside this limited company of people who have lived during a few recent centuries have been saved, we must assume some ground for their salvation. That ground must be the work of Christ, and we must adopt some larger view of it than that which restricts it to a single act done on a particular day centuries ago.

Just here let us observe certain suggestions of Scripture. One passage — according to both our versions — speaks of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8), which certainly suggests the idea that the atonement is not an isolated, but a perpetual fact; and Peter speaks of Christ as "the Lamb without blemish and without spot, who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for our sake" (1 Pet. i. 19, 20); and does not the Apostle John ground the redeeming work of Christ in that changeless love which is the very essence of the divine nature? If the atonement is an activity of love, must it not be, in principle, as eternal as the love out of which it springs? If atonement is an expression of the divine nature, a disclosure at once of the mercy and the righteousness of God, must it not represent the action of principles and laws which are eternally operative in the bosom of

Deity? If Christ does truly represent, as we are accustomed to believe, the saving mercy of God, and if he is, as the New Testament teaches, an eternal Being perpetually active in the world, how can we limit his atoning work to one historic transaction? If sin pervades the race, and if God is always manifesting his grace to sinners, atonement must represent a process perpetually operative in the essential nature of God.[1]

I believe that this is the truest and highest conception which our minds can form of the "holy mystery of Christ's cross and passion." We can best regard his atoning death as the "transactional revelation" of laws of life and being which are supreme and eternal in God. Wherever sin is, God is atoning for it by bearing it on his own compassionate heart in the fathomless mystery of divine sympathy. Through all the ages since sin darkened and cursed human life, Christ bore the cross of sacrifice in his heart; and when at length he carried the symbol of suffering love to the brow of Calvary, and hung in agony upon it, he was but experiencing in his human life the pain and shame with which sin had always pierced his spirit. If by an unwarranted application of the maxim that "God cannot suffer," we are to deny that the divine love can be grieved and wounded by human sin, and that it takes upon itself by sympathy the woes and burdens of its objects, we must certainly

[1] The incarnation and death of Christ are only the outward and temporal exhibition of an eternal fact in the being of God, and of a suffering for sin endured by the pre-incarnate Son of God ever since the fall. The wrath of God against sin began to be endured by Christ just so soon as sin began. The patriarchs and prophets were saved, not so much by the retroactive effect of a future atonement, as by the present effect of an atonement which was even then in progress. — President A. H. Strong, in *The Examiner*, Nov. 15. 1884.

conclude that human love furnishes no analogy to the love of God, and that this love is absolutely different in kind from any love that the human heart has ever felt.

We may well confess that we cannot penetrate the mystery of atonement, which opens vistas into the infinite and eternal which reach far beyond our sight. But it is vain for the mind to take refuge in the inconceivable. God must remain to us a mystery; but he must not be a mystery which darkens and confuses us — a mystery which paralyzes thought and baffles all interpretation by the human heart. Let us think of God in accordance with what we feel to be highest and holiest in man; let us, believing that man is made in God's image, seek to interpret God and his revelation in Christ in the light of what seems "likest God" in the human heart. Our efforts will be inadequate, but they are the best that we can make. If love in man and in God are not fundamentally the same, then God is not merely a mystery, but an enigma mocking human thought. Such a conception is an affront to our nature. The heart cries out for a God of whom it can know something through its own best feelings, and through its sense of kinship to him; for we must know God in this way if we are truly to know him at all.

The conception of atonement which I am presenting will be no novelty to those who are familiar with theology. Traces of this idea will be found here and there in theological thought, and a modern divine of great profundity and learning, the late Dr. Roswell D. Hitchcock, has strikingly presented it in a published sermon

entitled *Eternal Atonement.* He says that in the sufferings of Christ which culminated in his death, "eternal reality became temporal fact." This view is based upon the general principle that "all divine realities are eternal." Dr. Hitchcock says that God *feels* rebellion and sin, and has always felt it, and that his "agony over sin is eternal." "This agony of God over sin," he continues, "is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. God himself atones, to himself atones; and so atonement is both eternal and divine." [1] Why may we not, let me add, best conceive of the intercession of Christ and of the Spirit as representing to us certain aspects of this perpetually active, atoning love of God?

No fully rounded theory of atonement is taught in the New Testament. Certain facts are there stated, — the humiliation, sufferings, and death of Christ. The significance of these events is also stated; they are on account of sin, and in order to secure its forgiveness. It is also taught that they secure this result by revealing the divine righteousness. But New Testament teaching carries us little, if any farther. A theory of these facts, and of their relation to their result, must be wrought out in accord with what we deem most consonant with a rational interpretation of Christian truth in general, and with the character of God as disclosed in revelation. For Christian living no theory is necessary. Most Christians have no theory. There is a power in the picture of the griefs and sorrows of the suffering Christ, endured on our behalf, to touch and subdue the heart, far surpassing that of any theory in respect to

[1] *Eternal Atonement*, page 11. New York, 1888.

their necessity or their relation to God's moral government. I have sought in the foregoing remarks to suggest a mode of viewing the subject which seems to me to set it in right relations to what we know of the nature of God, and of his relations to mankind.

CHAPTER XI

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

We have seen that, according to the New Testament, the work of Christ in human life and history did not begin with his appearance in human form. It is reasonable, therefore, to believe that it did not cease with his departure from this world. The incarnation is an incident — though a most significant and critical one — in that perpetual self-revelation of God in Christ which is coextensive with human history. As the incarnation does not represent the beginning, so does it not mark the close of Christ's redeeming work. The New Testament doctrine of the eternal Word, or Son of God, finds its counterpart in the teaching concerning his changeless and eternal priesthood, according to which he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

We are, then, to inquire after the practical meaning of a group of words which the church has always applied to her ascended and glorified Lord. The words are: High Priest, Advocate, Mediator, Intercessor. These terms, if I mistake not, are but little used nowadays in sermons or in popular discussions of religion — a fact which is probably due to the mysteriousness of the truths for which they stand. They still linger, however, in the language of prayer and praise, thereby proving that they represent essential and practical con-

ceptions of Christ's person and work. Unless we limit the significance of Christ to his human appearance, we must attach the greatest importance to the unsearchable but profound, truths of his world-wide and perpetual spiritual activity in the salvation and sanctification of men.

I am deeply impressed with the mysteriousness of the subject. Fully to know the nature and method of the Saviour's activity in salvation would be to penetrate the very secret of Divinity. For such complete knowledge the human mind is utterly inadequate. But it does not follow that we can get no glimpses into the meaning of the mysterious truth; that we can form no helpful, even if but very imperfect, conception of what Christ continues to do for us. If we must decline to believe and to use inscrutable truths, we should be required to abjure religion altogether; for God himself is the supreme mystery, and everything spiritual is mysterious. But to insist upon limiting all thought concerning Christ to his human life on earth, is to run counter to his own self-testimony, and to the whole trend of New Testament teaching. The words of Christ speak more of eternity than of time. He declares that he came forth from God, and was going again to God; and the apostles — notably John and Paul — find the chief significance of his person and work in what he ever is and does, of which his work in the flesh is but an expression in terms of human life and experience.

In seeking to ascertain — at least, in part — the practical significance for Christian thought and life of the intercession of our Saviour, I shall begin by adducing the principal New Testament representations of his mediatorial office.

The doctrine of the intercession of Christ is strikingly presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The purpose of this epistle is to compare Christianity and Judaism, with a view to proving the superiority of the former. In accord with the author's purpose and method of thought, the Christian religion is described chiefly in terms and figures which are drawn from the Old Testament. Christ is accordingly represented as the High Priest — the antitype and fulfilment of the Old Testament priesthood. Unlike that office, which is temporary, his priesthood is changeless and eternal. "He abideth a priest forever." He does not minister, as do the Levitical priests, in a perishable sanctuary built by human hands, but in the eternal temple, the immediate presence of God. The Jewish ritual was but a shadow of the heavenly realities. The intercessions of all human priests are but symbolic or prophetic of the one all-prevailing intercession of the Mediator, Jesus. It is in this connection that the author describes Christ as our heavenly High Priest, sitting on the right hand of God, and ever making intercession for those who draw near unto God through him (Heb. vii. 25; viii. 1).

Besides this elaborate presentation of the priestly intercession of Christ in Hebrews, we have in the New Testament four passages — two from Paul and two from John — which express essentially the same conception. In the eighth chapter of Romans, Paul is urging the practical bearings of his preceding arguments. He dwells upon the Christian's secure sense of sonship to God, and upon the powerful aid of the divine Spirit which is vouchsafed to him. He draws the triumphant conclusion: "If God is for us, who is against us?" He

then argues that if God has given us his Son for our salvation, he will not fail to give us in him all needful gifts and graces for the completion of the work, and then again exclaims: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" No one shall, he implies; for "it is God who justifieth." Then follows another form of this same challenge: "Who is he that shall condemn?" No one can; for "it is Christ that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 31–34). It will be seen how significant to Paul's mind is this intercession of Christ, since he makes it one of the grounds of the Christian's confidence and triumph.

In the passage just noticed, the intercession of Christ is associated with the continuance and completion of the work of salvation after it has been begun. In the other Pauline passage, the mediatorship is conceived of as procuring the provision for salvation: "For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6). This passage suggests the connection to which I have here called attention, between the conception of Christ's pre-incarnate activity as the Light of men, and the notion of his continued intervention on man's behalf as the Mediator.

The two passages from John are next to be noticed. "If any man sin," says the apostle, "we have an Advocate[1] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John ii. 1). The word Advocate, or Paraclete, is applied to Christ only in this passage; commonly in

1 Or Paraclete — παράκλητος.

John it is a name for the Holy Spirit. It is a legal term, and denotes one who is called in to the side of another in defence — a helper. As applied to Christ, the term implies that he espouses the cause of sinful man, and is the medium through whom the divine forgiveness is sought and obtained. A similar idea is implied in the words of Christ, as reported in John xiv. 16: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth." Christ himself was an Advocate or Helper; the Spirit will be another, who will take his place so far as his bodily presence is concerned, but will only make more real and vital his spiritual presence with his disciples. We notice here that the office of advocacy or intercession is ascribed both to Christ and to the Spirit. We find the same association of ideas in Paul also, who represents the Spirit as "helping our infirmities," and as "making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 27).

Let us now try to estimate, in some measure, the practical significance for Christian thought and life of this doctrine of Christ's intercession.

1. It answers to the recognition, by the Christian consciousness, of Christ as the medium and agent of all spiritual blessing.

The language of Christian devotion has always expressed the conviction that God's grace to man is mediated through Christ. Prayer in Christ's name, or for his sake, is based upon this idea. The doctrine of Christ's mediation is the counterpart of the doctrine that in him God has disclosed and assured to us his

forgiving love. As he represents God to us, so he represents us before God. As in him God is brought near to us, so through him we, on our part, draw near to God. Since he embodies and represents the divine grace which procures our salvation, we must ever recognize and seek that grace through him who is the agent of its communication.

This truth may be partially illustrated from human relations. If an earthly king wished to assure rebellious subjects of his gracious disposition to pardon and befriend them, he could do so most effectually by sending to them some one who stood nearest to his own person, as, for example, his son, who should become a personal representative among the people of the royal clemency. If this son fully understood and shared his father's feeling towards these subjects, and at the same time perfectly sympathized with them in their alienation and peril, he would not only be the messenger of sovereign mercy to them, but the mediator of all their desires and petitions before their royal master and friend. In like manner, if Christ is the mediator of God's grace and forgiveness to us, he is at the same time our representative by virtue of his sympathetic identification of himself with us, and, therefore, the one through whom we present our confessions and prayers unto God.

We cannot set aside the significance of Christ's intercession — his continual representation of our case before God, and his perpetual procurement of divine grace and blessing for us — unless we deny the objective reality of his saving work on our account altogether. It is true that we cannot clearly picture to ourselves

the nature of this intercession. But it is equally true that we cannot adequately conceive of Christ's atoning work — the fact of which, however, is the very heart of the gospel. The best conceptions which we can form, alike of Christ's atonement and of his intercession, doubtless fall far short of the divine realities. Our conceptions are not the measure of divine truth. We must freely acknowledge that we cannot adequately define these realities. The effort to do so inevitably leads to the development of mechanical theories which overlook the very nature of the truths with which they seek to deal. The wiser method is to forego definition, and to rest content with such suggestions as these mysterious truths offer to our faith. In this way we shall not impoverish them by strained and unreal over-definition, and shall best realize, in thought and life, their real religious value.

2. The doctrine of Christ's intercession signifies the continued operation of the divine mercy in redemption — the perpetuity of atonement.

In speaking of atonement we sought to find its law or principle in the divine nature — in the sympathy of God and in his agony over sin. The intercession of Christ seems to me to accord with and to re-enforce this conception. If the historic atoning work of Christ is grounded in a perpetual action and process of the divine nature; if, in the light of Scripture, we can regard the earthly mission of Christ as grounded in the depths of his divine essence, and in his perpetual spiritual activity in human life and history — is it not reasonable to suppose that we should have some hint of the continuance of his gracious and saving work after his

ascension into the glory from which he came down to earth? To my mind this conception yields the deepest and most practical significance which we can attach to the mystery of the Saviour's intercession.

For religious experience the "intercession of Christ" signifies the supreme interest of the Redeemer in us, and his perfect sympathy with us. We derive our most helpful views of the subject from the "intercessory prayer" of Jesus, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. What is the burden of that prayer? That his disciples may be kept from evil, may be filled with heavenly joy, may continue steadfast in love, and may at length share his eternal glory. What is this matchless prayer but an expression of our Lord's deep and tender sympathy and yearning for the temporal and eternal welfare of his people? We can form no essentially different idea of his heavenly intercession on our behalf. We can only think of it as a perpetual voicing of our needs and desires, springing from a divine knowledge of all our wants and a fathomless sympathy with us in all our danger, weakness, and sin. Mystery as is the intercession, it is a glorious mystery. It assures us that the divine realities of love, sympathy, and sacrifice, which procured our salvation, are pledged to its completion; that the boundless compassion of God as expressed in the earthly life of Christ is still operative, because it is eternal. The divinity in Christ which atones for our sins, continually yearns and strives for our progress in holiness.[1]

This view of the subject gives a very real meaning to

[1] His work of intercession can be coextensive with the race and with the utmost stretch of history. He can intercede for all men in all times, for bar-

the language of devotion to which, under the previous heading, I made allusion. When we offer our prayers "in Christ's name," we express the desire that they may accord with his wish and purpose for us; we profess that we seek for ourselves what he, in his higher wisdom or love, seeks on our behalf. When we pray "through Christ," or "for Christ's sake," we recognize him as the medium and the perpetual embodiment of the divine mercy to us. These phrases are concrete equivalents of the formula, "for thy mercy's sake." All our petitions and expectations are based upon the divine grace. In Christ God has supremely manifested his favor, and continues to manifest it. When, therefore, we ask "for Christ's sake," we base our requests upon the divine mercy, which has been manifested to us chiefly in the person and work of the Redeemer. All who believe in Christ as the supreme manifestation of the divine will and nature may properly use this language, whatever various theories they may hold as to the method of his saving work. The most positive verdict of the Christian consciousness in all ages has been that we are, in some true sense, saved through Christ; that he was and is the medium of the divine grace in redemption. Of this great central truth of our religion the intercession of Christ is a corollary, and the spontaneous and universal language of Christian prayer an expression.

barian and Scythian, bond and free, for the unlettered and the rude, for the prince on his throne, for the savage in the forest, for the patriarchs and prophets of the old dispensation, for the apostles, martyrs, and heralds of the new. His intercession is as eternal and unchangeable as the priesthood on which it is based, and as the kingdom in which his regal petitions are the sum of all other prayers, and give their virtue to all other forms of interceding. — HENRY B. SMITH, *System of Christian Theology*, p. 483.

In prayer we thankfully recognize the work of grace which God has wrought for us in Christ. We think of Christ as appearing on our behalf; in him God is reconciled to us, and we are reconciled to God; he is our representative; to him we commit ourselves in approaching the Majesty of heaven. We intrust our prayers to him as the perfect interpreter of our wants, that they may be purified of all dross of ignorance and worldly desire, and may be made acceptable to God through their accord with the mind of Christ. This conception of the Redeemer's intercession is beautifully presented by the late Dr. Henry B. Smith, as follows: —

"There arises from all parts of the world at the morning and the evening, and through the labors of the day, a perpetual incense of adoration and of petition; it contains the sum of the deepest wants of the human race in its fears and hopes, its anguish and thankfulness; it is laden with sighs, with tears, with penitence, with faith, with submission; the broken heart, the bruised spirit, the stifled murmur, the ardent hope, the haunting fear, the mother's darling wish, the child's simple prayer; all the burdens of the soul, all the wants and desires nowhere else uttered, meet together in that sound of many voices, which ascends into the ears of the Lord God of hosts. And mingled with all these cravings and utterances is one other voice, one other prayer, their symphony, their melody, their accord, — deeper than all these, tenderer than all these, mightier than all these, — the tones of One who knows us better than we know ourselves, and who loves us better than we love ourselves; and who brings all these myriad fragile petitions into one prevalent intercession, purified by his own holiness, and the hallowing power of his work." [1]

3. The intercession of Christ is congruous with the truth of the incarnation. As it partakes of the mysteriousness, so also does it partake of the significance, of this cardinal doctrine of Christianity.

[1] *System*, p. 483.

The practical aspect of the incarnation is that God, in the person of his Son, unites himself with humanity. He takes upon him our nature, that he may purify and redeem it, and lift it up to the heights of his own holiness. The incarnation presupposes the kinship of man with God. It suggests the nearness of God to us, and the capacity of man to know and love God, and to live in communion with him. In the person of Christ the union of humanity and divinity is mysteriously realized. He is the God-man. In him God is brought down to earth, and humanity is lifted up to God.

Now, the mediatorship of Christ is based upon this idea of his divine-human character — the union of divinity and humanity in his incarnation. This mediatorship suggests the idea — which theology has commonly maintained — that Christ retains, in his heavenly exaltation, the humanity which he assumed in his incarnation. This seems to me an almost necessary inference from the doctrines of the incarnation and intercession. Christ is still the divine-human Saviour. He is the glorified Son of man. He is, therefore, the true representative of mankind. He has, if I may so express it, both the human and the divine points of view. He unites God and man, and being "himself man," is "the mediator between God and men" (1 Tim. ii. 5).

There is great practical power and value in the thought that this unique, incomparable person is praying for us. How great an impression is made upon us by the fact that we are remembered in the prayers of some dear friend. It speaks of a deep and tender interest as almost nothing else does. It assures us of sympathy, and of high and pure desires cherished on

our behalf. It testifies to the eager desire of the petitioner that the best of blessings should be ours — the favor and friendship of God. How much more, even, do the prayers of Christ for us signify and express the tenderest divine sympathy with us in our weakness and sin, and the deepest and purest interest in our truest well-being. No desire of ours for spiritual blessing ascends to heaven which does not touch a responsive chord in the heart of the Mediator. He craves for us all divine gifts and graces, more intensely than we even seek them for ourselves. Fitly, therefore, do we offer our prayers to heaven through him who knows us altogether, and who loves us even as he knows. He knows all the dross of our desires, and mediates to us the bestowment, not always of those things which in our ignorance and folly we ask for, but of those better blessings which the perfect wisdom and love of him who is greater than our hearts knows how to give us.

4. The New Testament teaching concerning the intercession of Christ seems to me to emphasize the objective character of his work for us, and the reality of our relations to him.

Needful as it is to recognize the subjective aspect of religion, it is even more essential not to forget its objective, divine basis. Religion is not merely the play within himself of man's own spiritual nature. This is one aspect of the religious life, but the tendency to lay stress on this alone issues in a one-sided subjectivism which can never do justice to the great biblical truths of revelation and redemption. If theology is to remain in any adequate sense Christian and biblical, it must insist that religion involves a very real

and vital relation to God, as he is revealed in the redemptive work of Christ and in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

Theology is certain to fall into extreme and one-sided views unless it combines with introspection an appreciative study of historic revelation. To interpret religious experience in pure subjectivity, as if Christ had never taught anything as to its origin, nature, and grounds, is as unwarranted as it would be to go to the opposite extreme, and divorce his teaching from actual life altogether. The current disparagement of theological doctrine springs largely from failure to study the content of revelation. The value of theology is too little appreciated because theology is too little studied. Why is this? Partly because it is easier to evolve out of one's own reflections what appear at the moment to be the truths of religion, than to search for these truths as for hid treasures by long and laborious study, and to interpret experience in the light of the revelation of God in Christ.

I call attention to this subject in this connection because our theme suggests it, and because it is, in my judgment, a matter of great importance for teachers of religion to consider. We can have no theology which is worth the name unless we hold to actual historic revelation, having a measurably definable content, and to a real and present Redeemer, with whom religion involves a living and all-important relation. We cannot help having a theology if we *do* hold fast these truths. In my opinion the disparagement of theology to which I have referred, is mainly due to a subtle scepticism respecting supernatural revelation, and to a consequent

withdrawal of attention from the sphere of objective reality into that of the religious feeling and imagination for the ascertainment of spiritual truth. This method of religious thought may result in clear and useful interpretations of certain subjective aspects of religion, but it is in continual danger of failing in comprehensiveness; and by its almost inevitable tendency to deny what it does not seem to find in its own introspections, it assumes a negative and destructive tone which largely neutralizes the force of such assertions as it does venture to make.

The whole teaching of the New Testament concerning the work of Christ for men in redemption and intercession assumes that his relation to us is not merely that of a teacher who saves us by telling us how to live and act. On that conception any human teacher who should have taught an equally lofty morality might save us as well as Christ, and all teachers would be saviours in so far as they teach men what is true and good. Christianity rests on a very different conception of Christ's work, and of his relation to mankind. He is an actual personal power for and in man. He really influences, touches, moulds, human life. He "works," as he himself said, for men and in them. According to this conception religion is a divine process as well as a human experience, and in this divine process the human experience is grounded.

The doctrine of the intercession of Christ illustrates the difference between the two methods of religious thought which I am contrasting. Inadequate as all our definitions of its meaning must be, it certainly means this: that Christ is now engaged on behalf of our salva-

tion ; that his redemptive work for us is, in some real sense, going forward *now*. The doctrine magnifies Christ, not merely as a person of surpassing excellence, whose life is most worthy of imitation, but as an efficient Redeemer who delivers men from the dominion of sin, and continually secures for them the blessing of forgiveness and of fellowship with God.

CHAPTER XII

THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH

One of the most prominent words in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, is the word *faith*. The truths which are associated with this term are absolutely fundamental in Biblical religion, and must, therefore, have a prominent place in such a study as we are pursuing. I shall group the suggestions which I propose to make upon the subject under two heads: (1) The nature of faith, and (2) Its saving significance.

Perhaps the simplest answer which can be given to the question: "What is faith?" is that it is *trust*. But if this answer seems very simple, it must be remembered that it involves the most profound truths of religion and theology. The answer gives rise to such questions as these: trust in *what*, or in *whom?* for what *purpose*, and on what *grounds?* Faith may be very simple in its actual exercise, as, for example, in the case of a child; but when we reflect deeply upon what it really implies in the mature and thoughtful mind, we see that it is a very complex act. It has its intellectual element, and is closely bound up with the processes of reasoning and thought. It is an act of the will also, involving choices of the utmost importance, and largely draws its life and power from the religious feelings. But let us begin our study of the

subject by attending to its simpler and more practical aspects.

This trust which best defines the nature of religious faith involves, on the one hand, humility on man's part, a sense of his weakness and sin, a confession of his insufficiency to be and to do what he ought; and it involves, on the other hand, a confidence and repose of soul in God which believes that he is ready to supply our lack according to the riches of his grace in Christ. Faith is thus the receptive attitude of the soul towards God — the opening of the life towards his boundless mercy and love, as the flower opens itself to be filled with the sunlight. It has been common in theology to define faith as the *condition* of receiving God's forgiving love; but I think there is truth in the suggestion of a distinguished American theologian, that faith is more accurately defined, not merely as the *condition*, but as the *act* of receiving — the act of appropriating in humility and thankfulness the gifts of God's grace in Christ.[1]

Faith is, above all things, a filial act. When a soul, weary of sin and of self, first begins to long for God, that is the turning back of the lost child, who, by his unfilial life, is no more worthy to be called God's son, towards his father's love and his own true home. The matchless parable of Jesus concerning the prodigal son tells in its simple story the profoundest meanings and

[1] Salvation is not offered to us upon any condition, but freely and for nothing. We are to do nothing for it; we are only to take it. This *taking* and *receiving* is *faith*. . . . Faith cannot be called the *condition* of receiving, for it is the *receiving* itself. Christ holds out, and believers receive. — JONATHAN EDWARDS, *Observations concerning the Scripture Economy of the Trinity and Covenant of Redemption*, New York, 1880, pp. 65, 66.

the absolute necessity of faith. Disobedience and ingratitude have sundered the true relations of the home. Faith is the purpose and the act of returning. The first dawnings of faith are seen in the lost son's sense of his misery, and in the feeling that it is unnecessary, and that he has brought it upon himself. The whole process of thought and decision by which he considers his folly and assures himself of his father's willingness to receive him, represents but the preparatory stages of that faith in the father's goodness which at length evinces itself in the first step taken towards home. If, then, any one asks what faith is, I should answer in the realistic imagery of the parable, that it is the resolution to return home and the *journey thither*. It is, first of all, the remorse, the misery, the penitence; then the hope, the confidence of welcome and forgiveness; and later it is the sight of home with its open door, the eagerness, the expectancy, the sight and the joy of seeing the father coming forth to meet the returning one, the leap into the father's arms, the rapture of the father's kiss.

To ask why faith is necessary is only to ask why this lost son needs to go home. His rags, hunger, and wretchedness are reason enough. There can be no recovery for him from his disobedience, no return to his own true self, except by a complete change of attitude and action towards his home and his father. Everything turns on the question whether in humble trust and self-surrender he will return to receive his father's forgiveness and bounty. In other words, everything turns upon an act of *faith*.

The same idea of self-renouncing trust is the burden

of all Paul's teaching concerning faith, and, indeed, of the whole Bible. Men cannot be saved by deeds of obedience to the divine law, because they are too sinful and weak perfectly to keep its requirements. There remains, then, but one other way — the way of faith. The deliverance of the soul from its sins can never come from the soul's own struggles alone. Left to itself, it is like a bird which vainly beats the bars of its prison-house, longing for freedom. Its deliverance must be accomplished by a power above that of man. It is wrought when we come into new and right relations to God. Man must join his life to the divine life if he would be delivered. This is but to say that if a child will enjoy his father's bounty he must accept it; if he will live in his true relations as a son, he must be in an obedient, trustful, and receptive attitude towards his father's love. Therefore faith is not so much an achievement as an acceptance. In its exercise we do not climb, but rest. We resign self-sufficiency. We cease to demand that God give us our individual portion of talent and strength to spend in selfish isolation from that inheritance of moral duties and spiritual interests into which we were born. We come to our better selves — and no man comes to God until he first comes to himself. We learn that we can only truly live in communion with God, and with one another; that the life of humility and trust alone sets us into helpful and happy relations to the world.

Faith is a personal relation. Its significance and power are chiefly due to the fact that it joins us to God as revealed in Christ. It is not a mere belief, opinion, or conviction; it is union with Christ. The function of

faith in religion may be likened to that which the roots of a tree perform for the tree. These unite the tree to the life-giving forces of nature. Their value lies in the fact that they take hold upon the resources of the earth, and make them available for the growth of the tree. Similarly, faith has its value, not in itself, but in the divine life and power which it grasps and appropriates.

Faith is also a growing thing. It may be very defective, but, if genuine, it is capable of growth. It may rest upon very inadequate grounds, and grasp but imperfectly its proper object, and yet be susceptible of constant enlargement and deepening. Such was Nathanael's faith, which at first rested only upon Jesus' insight into his thoughts. He should see, as time went on, said Jesus, "greater things," that is, more adequate grounds for trust in him. When our Lord wrought the miracle in Cana of Galilee, and "manifested forth his glory," it is said that "his disciples believed on him," that is, entered upon a new stage of faith as they gained new assurance of his divine power and glory.

Our Lord recognized the distinction between the more superficial and the deeper grounds of faith in the interview with Thomas after the resurrection. This apostle demanded tangible evidence before he would believe. Jesus made this the occasion of laying down a great general truth: "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John xx. 29). This is the beatitude of those who have not seen Christ in the flesh. Jesus called upon men to believe on him because of what he said and was. The truth which

he brought to men, the life which he lived among them, and the spirit which he everywhere breathed, were forces which are adapted to quicken faith in those who had any aptitude for a spiritual religion. But he tells men that if they are not susceptible to these incentives to faith, they are to believe "for the very works' sake." Jesus regarded it as a mark of the spiritual degeneracy of his age that the people could be moved towards faith by no proof but miracles. "Except ye see signs and wonders," he said, "ye will in no wise believe;" and for this temper he characterized his generation as "evil." The sort of half-faith which sprang up in the minds of many who were impressed by his miracles was often very superficial, and the apostle John aptly says that to such persons Jesus did not readily yield his confidence (John ii. 24).

These illustrations from the New Testament show that there may be many grades of faith, and that faith may continually rise from lower to higher as it learns more and more to appreciate Christ, and to discern the meaning of his revealing and saving work.[1]

Let us next consider the saving significance of faith. This is best seen by observing that faith and grace are correlatives. Grace is the favor of God to the undeserving; faith is the thankful acceptance of that favor, and the entrance upon the life of fellowship with God and of obedience to him. The very idea of a gracious salvation, that is, the idea that God deals liberally with us, treating us better than we deserve, implies faith as the acceptance on man's part of the proffered mercy.

[1] On this part of our subject, see the chapter on "The Appropriation of Salvation," in my *Johannine Theology*.

If salvation originates in the divine grace, it must be by faith on man's part. If, on the other hand, it is on condition of merit or "works" on man's part, then it is not of grace, but of debt on God's part (Rom. iv. 4).

This is the truth on which Paul insists so strenuously in teaching that faith is reckoned, or accepted, as righteousness. Faith is trust in Christ, the perfect Revealer of God, the perfect Redeemer. It is union with Christ, involving the disposition of obedience to God, and sympathy with his will. Faith, therefore, implies the true temper of humility, of confidence, and of service. It is not righteousness in the sense of actual perfection; it is not righteousness in the sense of being an act inherently meritorious, entitling its subject to God's favor: but it is union with Christ; and union with Christ insures increasing Christlikeness, and Christlikeness *is* righteousness. God, therefore, accepts our faith for righteousness, because, as union with Christ, it guarantees our increasing attainment of righteousness. It includes or involves right disposition or direction. This righteousness, therefore, is real, not fictitious. It is the possession of the spirit of Christ into which we have entered by faith. It is not, indeed, actually perfect, but it is ideally so; it looks forward and struggles on towards perfection, and is sure of final success, because all the forces of divine love and grace are pledged to it.

The objection that God can accept only a perfect righteousness, and that our righteousness is never perfect, would lead to the conclusion that God could not accept us at all, and would exclude the idea of his grace. What God requires of us, in the first instance,

is that we enter by faith upon a right relation to himself as revealed in Christ, and begin the spiritual life. This spiritual life *is* righteousness; it is right character, the increasing attainment of the true goal of our being. The development of true Christian righteousness is a *process*. None can claim that this process is complete in him. God does not require that it should be complete, but that it should have been begun. Paul himself disclaimed having attained perfection, but he said he was following on after Christ. In faith we enter upon this divinely appointed path.

The perplexities with which this subject has commonly been surrounded largely disappear if one simply holds fast the conception that Christian righteousness is a character to be progressively developed according to the pattern of Christ, and by the power of his spiritual presence. The question, then, how to secure the righteousness, or acceptance with God, of which the Bible says so much, is already answered, — by entering upon the kind of life Christ bids us live; by taking him for our Master and Saviour.

This acceptance of Christ in his revelation and saving work is what the New Testament calls faith. We enter upon the possession of the true righteousness by faith, or life-union with Christ, by making him the pattern and power of our lives. We become acceptable to God, not by struggling and striving, but by accepting and trusting. We do not have to purchase or merit God's favor; we have but to accept it. It is as free as the bounties of nature. God's gifts are generously bestowed; they pour themselves into every life that does not shut them out.

Define the work of salvation as we will; hold what theory of the atonement we may; conceive of the relation of faith to righteousness according to any of the various theories — this remains the great and essential truth of the whole matter, that God accepts us when we are willing to accept him as he is disclosed in Christ. Salvation is a gift as free as air and sunlight; but, like these, must be accepted and appropriated in order to be enjoyed.

To me there does not seem to be anything arbitrary in the idea that God should pronounce man righteous upon condition of his faith in Christ. If real faith in Christ does not set a man on the road to righteousness, if it does not bring him into those relations and under those forces which tend powerfully to *right* his character and to ennoble his manhood, I do not know what does or can. In saying this, I am not speaking of mere belief, which James tells us devils might have, and remain devils still; I am speaking of the real and thorough commitment of the heart to Christ, whereby the motives and spirit of his life become the guiding lights and shaping powers of human action and character. Faith does conduct us to a true righteousness, by bringing us under the power of the greatest forces that make for righteousness in this world.

To the New Testament writers this acceptance of Christ does not mean merely to make him our example and ideal; though it does mean *that*, and that is one of the greatest things in life. It means also an actual personal relation with Christ, in which he is spiritually present with us and in us. Christianity is not merely a series of fine ideas and memories concerning Christ.

The gospel is not merely a system of truth or a philosophy. Christianity contemplates a real spiritual life under the influence of real spiritual powers. It proclaims a living and present Christ — a Christ never more living and present than now — never more directly operative in the church and in the world — a mysterious and invisible, but most real presence in human life to-day.

From our personal relations spring the most potent influences which touch and mould our lives. How significant and powerful, then, must be that deepest personal relation possible to the soul, — the relation of fellowship with God as revealed in Christ. The apostle Paul has sketched in one of his boldest passages the effect of our holding Christ thus continually in our faith and fellowship. He pictures the believing soul as beholding with unclouded vision the beauty and majesty of Christ which are mirrored in the gospel; and as the soul gazes in faith and love upon the divine ideal of life which is thus presented to it, lo, it is itself transformed more and more into the same image by the mystic processes of the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 18). What the apostle is so strikingly picturing is the transforming power over the human spirit of the divine, ideal life of Christ, when the union of faith and love has brought the human personality into contact and sympathy with it.

It is not to be forgotten that Christian faith has also its intellectual side, and involves consent to certain great truths which are most vitally related to character. In this aspect of it also, faith has a certain practical saving significance. The truths which faith holds are

9591

such as these : the existence, the benevolence, and the holiness of God, who has revealed his love and grace in the perfect human life of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Faith involves belief in the Fatherhood of God, and in the moral kinship of man to him. It involves belief that right and truth are supreme, and must, at length, be triumphant. It cherishes the conviction that reason rules the world, and that the events of human life and history are embraced within the scope of wise and loving purposes. While mere theoretic assent to such truths as these would not constitute Christian faith in the full biblical sense, the genuine and practical belief in them must be a great power in any life which cherishes them. I affirm without hesitation that these are the truths which, in all ages, have had power to save the minds of men from those wretched philosophies of life which have so often driven the human heart to despair. He who sincerely holds these truths can never believe, with Materialism, that the universe is a vast machine whose wheels of time and fate grind relentlessly on ; nor, with Dualism, that evil is as eternal and as powerful as goodness, and can never be overcome ; nor, with Pessimism, that existence is a wearisome burden, and that life is not worth living. To the eye of Christian faith these philosophies are pitiable and contemptible. The Master whom faith recognizes has taught the heart to hope and to trust. Human nature responds to the assurances and promises of Jesus. The prophetic instincts of the soul re-enforce the gospel which proclaims peace and joy as the true portion and goal of human life. This conviction Tennyson has embodied in the noble lines : —

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice, "Believe no more,"
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered, "I have felt."

[1] *In Memoriam*, Canto cxxiii.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DOCTRINE OF LOVE

All the voices of revelation unite in ascribing the supremacy, among the virtues, to love. The institutes of Moses, and the new commandment of Jesus; the abstract reasonings of Paul, and the practical exhortations of James; the vivid and impulsive rhetoric of Peter, and the subdued and tender verses of John — all blend into a perfect harmony, the keynote of which is the truth that love is of God, and that everyone that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. We must, therefore, inquire what is the content of this principle, and why is it so central in religion?

No adequate definition of love can be given, nor is any necessary. Love is, at any rate, the power that leads us out of ourselves. It is the forth-putting, the outreaching impulse which unites us in common interest to others. Hence, "love is of God," because it is God's nature to impart blessing and to seek fellowship with his intelligent creatures. Love is, therefore, a divine principle, implanted in us by virtue of our creation in God's image. All love among men is a reflection of the divine nature in man — a trace of the presence of him who is ever seeking to reconcile men to himself, to one another, and to their own true destiny; to solve the contradictions and abolish the dis-

cords of life; and to unite men in the helpful and happy fellowship of the kingdom of love and peace. Let us now seek to exhibit in detail the principal elements of this conception of love.

Love is a personal relation. In our common usage we have greatly extended the meaning of the word "love." We often apply it to mere objects of sense or matters of fancy. These are degradations of that noblest, sublimest word, which the Scriptures have consecrated to express the highest perfections of the human and the divine character. In the biblical sense, love exists only between persons. It is a moral union of kindred beings. The outer world and the lower orders of creation are never spoken of as the objects of God's love. He takes pleasure in them, and has a care for them, for "his tender mercies are over all his works;" but he loves only man, because love is moral union, based upon kinship of spirit. All those attachments and fancies which are beneath a high and pure moral union of spirits, are excluded from the sphere of love in the sense of the New Testament. Love is a real affinity and fellowship of life. It is not a mere feeling. The conception of love as a mere stirring of emotion leads many into the dark as to what is meant when we are commanded to love God supremely. We may put the meaning of that "first and great commandment" before ourselves thus: God is the absolutely perfect Being. Love to God is sympathy, affinity, harmony, with his perfection. It is the fixed choice of God, and the constant striving of our hearts after fellowship with him.

To reveal this divine perfection to men through a

life, human in its experiences, yet divine in its purity, and then to help men to choose that true and perfect life, and to make it the type and law of their own, is the chief purpose of Christianity. Hence religion is neither mere ethics, nor mere belief, but a personal relation of fellowship with God and of likeness to him as he is revealed in Jesus Christ.

Love also involves an intelligent choice of its object. True love is never blind; it acts in the light of reason. Mere sensuous desire or fancy (often called "love") is blind, because it does not act from rational motives. No real love is possible between persons without an intelligent choice of each other. If the emotions are the warmth of love, intelligence is its light. This consideration helps us to understand what love to God means. We are to choose God in the light of what we know him to be, as the object of our service and the goal of our hopes. God has revealed himself to us in Christ as perfectly as our finite understandings will permit us to know him. This revelation is found in the principles, spirit, and teaching of the Redeemer. We are to choose these for our own, and live, as Paul says, "unto Christ." To trust in the divinely revealed Saviour, and to adopt and exemplify the principles of life which are divinely revealed in him, is to love God.

Love enlists the whole being in devotion to its object. It fires every noble emotion. It kindles the whole life into a calm, steady flame of zeal and devotion. Love longs to give, to serve, to bless. All the truest endearments of earth serve to illustrate this aspect of love. The love that gives nothing for its object may well be doubted. But the gifts of sympathy, time,

kindly attentions, and thoughtful care — these are the language of love. Well might Jesus say that the story of that woman who fell at his feet with her box of ointment, and mingled her gift with her tears, should be told throughout the whole world; for it has in it an undying significance. It was because she had thus given that Jesus concludes, "She loved much" (Luke vii. 47). Thus love to God is seen to be the response of the human heart in gratitude and devotion to the heart of him who "first loved us."

Love furnishes the strongest motives for action and service. What danger will not men face, what hardship will they not endure, for love. The grand heroisms of the world have had their spring in the very principles which Jesus enthrones — the love of God and the love of man. Ambition has gathered armies and founded empires, but love has won the conquests for the kingdom of truth and righteousness. Human relationships constantly illustrate the potency of the motives which love supplies. Jacob serves seven years for Rachel, and, adds the old story, with a true touch of nature, "They seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her" (Gen. xxix. 20). Love makes hardships light. Long weeks and months we watch at the bedsides of those we love, and hardly think of toil or care, until the body is worn out, while the spirit is keen and energetic, because it is sustained by love. Love is like a fine ether which bathes and penetrates all our life — a breath of God which surrounds us and imparts sweetness to our existence. Fitly does a biblical poet say that this wonderful, magical power is as "strong as death" (Cant. viii. 6). A principle which involves such

motives and inspirations, when directed to the highest ends, may well be called the sum of all goodness.

Love is the most comprehensive virtue. The apostle Paul urges this consideration when, in speaking of the graces of the Christian life, — kindness, humility, forbearance, and forgiveness, — he adds: "And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. iii. 4). All other virtues have their unity in love. Hence the same apostle teaches that the end of Christian instruction is love (1 Tim. i. 5), and that love is "the fulfilment of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10). We can easily see that every form of goodness is included in the sphere of love, since love is the supreme choice and service of God, the perfect character. All truths concerning God find their unity in the supreme truth that "God is love" (1 John iv. 8, 16). Love is moral completeness. God is righteous, because he is love, since love is eternally holy. He is kind and benevolent, because he is love, since love is eternally benevolent. In this grand truth all Christian doctrines are brought into unity and harmony.

Love is the only principle on which any high form of human society is possible. If the members of a community do not minister to each other's good; if they do not serve and help one another; that is, if they do not act, in greater or less degree, on the principle of love — no society is possible. Selfishness, which is the opposite of love, is the principle of isolation, and would be the destruction of social life. Love is the principle of association and brotherhood, and is, therefore, the only bond which can hold men together in pleasant and helpful relations. Thus the principle of love, which Christianity

makes central, is the only principle on which a true civilization can be built. The law of sacrifice and service is the law of life for nations as well as for individuals. Even the other elements which must enter into all high civilizations, such as wealth, science, and the arts, can be but sparingly utilized for the good of the community except under the law of love. To look not only on one's own things, but also on the things of others, is the essential condition of all social happiness and well-being.

Love extends its offices to the widest range of objects. It cannot shut up its sympathies and services to a few favorites. If it should, it would be no longer love, but only a slightly enlarged selfishness. This aspect of love is presented in the teaching of Jesus by a striking illustration. When asked, "Who is my neighbor?" he told his parable of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, who wounded him and left him half dead. And who is the man who, in passing that way and finding him, had compassion on him and ministered to him? A Samaritan! A man of the nation which the Jews hated! These men who would not have touched each other in the streets, — men at the widest removes in respect to sympathy and social standing, — are neighbors still, and are bound to one another by the imperishable obligations of love. Such was the Lord's answer concerning the range of true love (Luke x. 30–37).

Another peculiarity of love is that it is not only great enough to reach to the grandest heights of human duty, but is also great enough to descend to its minutest and commonest particulars. It is one of the glories of love

that it prompts the great heroisms of the world; but it is almost a greater glory that it is able to nerve for their tasks those plodding lives whose days are all so commonplace, and to inspire to faithfulness in the things that are least. There are but few who have the opportunities or gifts for great attainments. Most men need an inspiration for the common tasks and duties that come to them daily in wearisome routine, more than for any grand achievements. Human life is mainly made up of commonplaces. "If," says F. W. Robertson, "you compute the sum of happiness in any given day, you will find that it is composed of small attentions and kind looks." We need a principle that will touch and elevate these details of our every-day lives. The moral heroism of the martyrs would probably be worth less to most of us in our conditions, than the kindly sunny atmosphere, which love can breathe around our commonest tasks and joys and troubles. Who can forget the power of love to stoop to the commonest duty, as long as there stands upon the page of the gospel that most suggestive description of the serving love of him who knew that he came forth from God and was going again to God (John xiii. 1, *seq.*)?

We cannot realize the power of love unless we think how much it can bear. "Love suffereth long and is kind." We have but to remember what parents will bear from a wayward, wicked son. When promises are all broken, and compassion itself seems quenched in despair, the first sign of repentance or reform is hailed with hope, and the parental heart makes haste with its invitation, "Come home once more." True to life, the matchless parable of Jesus tells its story of fatherhood

waiting to bless the wandering, lost child — touching picture of what love can do and suffer. We cannot wonder that love is supreme in the gospel, when we look upon this parabolic picture of the love of God.

The law of love is also the law of freedom from sin. True love bears within itself the best guaranty of good character, of righteous living. "Love," said Augustine, "and then do what thou wilt." The "apostle of love" insists that love and the life of sin are essentially incompatible. He says: "Whosoever is begotten of God," that is, whosoever has entered upon the life of love that God imparts, "does not commit sin;" but he dares go farther and add: "And he cannot sin because he is begotten of God." His meaning is not that the true Christian man is free from all *acts* of sin, for he elsewhere asserts that such is not the case, but that the life of habitual and wilful sin is radically inconsistent with the possession of love. Since love is union with Christ, it must contain in itself the true principle of righteousness. If love and sin are opposites, it follows that love and righteousness must essentially involve one another. The more completely our lives are under the sway of the law of love, the more complete will be our deliverance from the power of sin, since love involves harmony with the divine life.

The logical basis of all these truths concerning love is that highest and most comprehensive truth of our religion, — that God himself is love. Love is central in religion because it is central in God, as in the mystic vision of the Apocalypse, the Lamb — the symbol of suffering love — stands in the midst of God's throne (Rev. vii. 17). Shall we, then, dare to say what seems to fol-

low, that to serve and sacrifice is possible for God? Yes. God is love, and service and sacrifice are but activities of love. It is, as we have seen, the very nature of love to give, to serve, to sacrifice, and bless. If this is not the nature of the divine love, then that love is unintelligible to the human mind, and is neither reflected nor interpreted in the love of human hearts.

If our Lord lived a life of service, giving himself without stint to help and bless men, it is because it is really Godlike so to do. If Christ lived a life of sympathy, bearing men's griefs and carrying their sorrows, it is because there is a great compassion, of which all human tenderness is but a faint reflection, in the heart of the Eternal. If Christ gave his life in vicarious sacrifice for men, it is because there is in the being of God himself the possibility of vicarious suffering, which, so far from marring his blessedness, is one of the elements of that matchless perfection whose name is love.

We, accordingly, find that this divine law of service and self-giving has been wrought into the very constitution of the universe. While this principle is central and distinctive in Christianity, it is by no means confined to it. While the truths which God has revealed in the gospel transcend all other truths, they do not stand off apart and separate from the principles which he has wrought into nature, and into the soul of man; they are rather the crown and completion of them. In Christianity we see illustrated and operative the highest laws of life and being in their relation to the noblest ends. The world is made and administered upon the principle of interdependence and mutual helpfulness. In nature, one set of forces is brought under contribu-

tion to another. The lower force of gravitation is subordinated to the higher force of chemical affinity. This, in turn, is subordinated to the force whose various forms are light, heat, and electricity; and these forms of force die and rise again in the organic processes of vegetable life. Then the products of the vegetable forces are brought under contribution for the support of animal life; and, finally, all these are subjected to the reign of a higher sceptre, — the sceptre of reason and thought.

Thus the beauty and grandeur of nature are made possible only by this interrelation of various forces. The flowers cannot bloom in fragrance and beauty, unless the forces of earth and air and moisture give themselves for their support. The sun could not shine on, flooding the world with light, if it were not slowly consuming itself. The fields could not wave with harvests, if the seed that is sown in the ground did not give itself and die. To this very analogy between self-giving and self-obliteration in nature, and self-sacrifice in loving service, our Lord referred, in illustrating the divine law which ruled his own life, when he said: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Jesus often declared that he was under this law of self-giving. He must give his life for men in labor and suffering, and, finally, in the death of the cross, before he could be glorified. This was the necessity to which divine love had subjected him. His dying for men took its solemn meaning from the fact that he had lived for them. He was giving his life every day of his ministry, in a sense far deeper than we have ever fully fathomed.

He gave the things which really make up life, — his sympathy, his personal influence, and the helpful offices of love and kindness.

The principle which Jesus so much emphasized in his teaching, and so perfectly illustrated in his life, that he that giveth his life shall save it, is one of universal validity and application. It is the supreme law of the universe. God himself would be robbed of the character with which we invest him, were not this giving impulse fundamental to his nature. With all our best conceptions of his goodness and grace is intertwined the thought of him as the bountiful Giver. The creation of the world, as well as its redemption, was an act of self-imparting love. God is to us the perfect character, because he is the infinite Giver. Here, then, is the ideal for all complete life. When Jesus comes to reveal God, he comes proclaiming that the only road to completeness of life is through giving, service, sacrifice. Like his Father who has sent him, he works, loves, and gives. Thus he lives out the ideal life; thus he comes to his exaltation and glory. The way lay through sacrifice. There is no other path by which a soul can ever come to the glory with which sacrificing love has now clothed him in the presence of the Father.

The law of serving and giving is the law for all true and noble living. Men must give their lives for each other. This law is not fulfilled by the giving of specific things out of one's abundance, in which "a man's life consisteth not." If with Peter we are compelled to say, "Silver and gold have I none," we can at least add, "Such as I have, give I thee." We have still some-

thing to give, — ourselves ; and this is the greatest and best gift of all. In his sacrifices and services for his churches, Paul could say, "I die daily." He was constantly giving himself, his sympathies, his energies, in self-denying labors. Thus he gave his life, and how truly did he save it !

Such is the giving of life which ends in taking it again glorified by relf-renouncing love. Such is the abasement which brings the true exaltation. This is the service which makes truly great, the dying that ends in larger life, the giving that makes rich, the sowing in patience and love that brings a harvest of summer flowers. Thus —

> "Men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

This self-giving, when practised in its true spirit, does not awaken that sense of personal deprivation and loss which is so commonly thought to be associated with it. The spirit of all true service — of all Christ-like giving of ourselves to others — springs from love, and love finds its richest reward and keenest joy in such self-giving. Obedience to this law brings a sense of the fulness of life, and not of loss and want. He who serves from love soon learns to find his joy and life's true richness in so serving. The mother who watches over her children, and guards their every interest with jealous care, would not admit that her care and watching are a self-deprivation, something without which her life would be fuller and happier ; it is her privilege to do this, her joy, her right under the sanction of God's supreme law, — the law of service.

Tennyson has embodied this thought in the familiar lines: —

> Love took up the glass of time, and turned it in his glowing hands;
> Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.
>
> Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords with might, —
> Smote the chord of self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight.[1]

[1] Locksley Hall.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DOCTRINE OF PRAYER

THERE is no theme which is more vital to the Christian life than the subject of prayer. It has a large place in the teaching and work of Jesus and his apostles, and the church has always rightly given it a special emphasis among Christian duties and privileges. I shall therefore treat, in this chapter, of prayer in its connection with some other elements of Christian doctrine and life, with a view of emphasizing some phases of the subject which have not always received the attention which they deserve.

The most essential idea in the Christian doctrine of prayer is that prayer springs from our filial relation to God. The fullest teaching of our Lord on the subject — the teaching which is the basis of all other New Testament teaching — is found in the sixth chapter of Matthew; and here the fundamental idea of true prayer throughout is that God is our Father. The whole development of the subject, the warnings against the "vain repetitions" of the heathen, and the formal humility of the Pharisees — all rest upon this idea. The conception of God as Father is the corrective of these false and superficial views. Hence men are taught to pray beginning, "Our Father who art in heaven." Prayer, then, is the expression of the child's need and of the child's claim upon the Father.

Another presupposition of all true prayer is that our Father knows all our needs, and is willing, in advance, to supply them. Hence our Lord's warning against the empty repetitions of the heathen, which rest upon the idea that the divinity is reluctant to grant his favors, and that his reluctant mind must be won over by the prolonged and incessant repetition of the same wish or cry. Over against this conception Jesus places his thought that "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." To the same effect also is his counsel against undue anxiety concerning food and raiment, which stand as symbols of the necessities of our daily life: "After all these things do the Gentiles seek, but your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." This whole line of thought reaches its culmination in the assurance that God is more willing to grant his blessings to those who ask him than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children.

God is not a reluctant, but a willing, giver. His willingness surpasses anything known to earthly love. We do not extort his favors from him; they wait to descend upon us so soon as we rightly ask; that is, so soon as we are in a true attitude of trust and receptiveness towards them. This thought of God in his relation and disposition towards us — so clearly and fully expounded to us by our Lord — is the corrective of widespread popular misconceptions concerning prayer which linger still among us, and have often created a kind of phraseology in which to express themselves. Prayer does not make God willing; he is willing already and always. Prayer is no besieging of the gates of heaven,

as if a fortification must be broken down before we could gain access to the presence of our Father. The sincerity and effectiveness of prayer are in no way proportioned to its loudness, as if our God were deaf to the wishes of his children. All such conceptions are relics of the worship of those who thought that they should be heard for their "much speaking."

Again, prayer, as the expression of the filial relation in its different phases of thanksgiving, acknowledgment, adoration, and petition, has faith, obedience, and love for its basis and spring. Prayer, in its essence, is not, of course, in the words we use, but in the wish, the thought, the desire, the love, of which our words are the expression. Only in such a view do we gain the full New Testament thought of prayer. Jesus spoke a parable to the end that men ought *always* to pray, and Paul counsels the Thessalonians to pray *without ceasing*. These expressions certainly do not mean that we are always to be in the attitude or act of prayer. They rest upon the idea that prayer, in its essence and spirit, is the disposition of constant desire and thankfulness towards God, the feeling of receptiveness and trust — in a word, faith in his goodness and providence; the confidence that for those who love him all things work together for good. An old familiar hymn rightly interprets to us this thought: –

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near."

It follows, from what has been said, that prayer is more than petition. It is not limited to the time when we are in the attitude of devotion, or are repeating, or even thinking, any set form of words. Prayer has its origin and root in the soul's inmost life; in the yearnings and desires of the life Godward, the deepest of which never come to audible expression; in the hopes and longings which form the undercurrents of our life of communion with God, and which lie too deep for human words. One might almost say that prayer, in its deepest meaning, is a name for the whole spirit and sweep of the religious life in its desires, yearnings, and hopes, on its Godward side; but if this seem to be an unwarranted extension of the meaning of the word prayer, we may, at least, say that prayer springs from this inner life of the spirit, and from it derives its sincerity, its intensity, and its power.

> Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
> Whose loves in higher love endure.[1]

From the standpoint of this conception we are able to see what is the real power of prayer. It is the power of a child's wish. Along with the crude physical and mechanical conceptions which have so often dominated in theology and religion, we have popular conceptions of prayer which do not seem to grasp its ethical significance and spiritual value. Much of the language concerning prayer as a "power" seems to rest upon the idea that its operation is something like that of a physical force. In nature physical forces produce certain definite and invariable results. Similar

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, canto xxxii.

uniformity of sequences has sometimes been claimed for prayer; and some have been willing to lower the whole subject to the physical sphere, and put the efficacy of prayer to the test of experiment by means of a "prayer gauge." Such an idea derives all its force from prevalent misconceptions concerning the power of prayer.

Our idea of prayer should be elevated above the physical sphere, and ennobled by our associating with it the thought of the moral and spiritual relations with which prayer is primarily concerned. The true power of our prayers with God lies in the faith which they utter. It was just in this connection of ideas that Jesus employed his strongest words concerning the power of prayer, throwing his thought into a parabolic form: "If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done" (Matt. xxi. 21). Or, if Luke has preserved the more exact setting of this saying (Luke xvii. 6), it was in response to the prayer of the apostles, "Increase our faith," that Jesus gave them this assurance of how great things are possible to faith.

The point of chief importance, in this connection, is that these assurances are set in relation to *faith*, and are to be interpreted in accordance with the doctrine of faith and its logical implications. They are statements of what is possible to faith, that is, to childlike trust in God's will and wisdom — a conception widely different from the view often taken, that they are statements to the effect that our desires may give the law to the divine order, and produce results with all the definiteness and uniformity of sequence known to the physical

laboratory. No! These promises have attached to them the implied conditions which belong to the very nature of Christian faith. The great possibilities of prayer are predicated, not upon our demand to have our wills done, but upon faith, that is, upon subjection to God's will.

It follows from the views thus far presented that Christian prayer involves subjection to God's will. It is not the prevailing of the human will over the divine. It is not the triumph of human knowledge over God's wisdom. It carries into all its requests the spirit of submission and trust. This is the lesson of Jesus' life. But few of his prayers have been preserved to us. They were uttered — or rather breathed out in silence — when he was alone in the stillness of the night, in the solitude of the mountain. But one of the most significant of his petitions has come down to us. It was uttered in the supreme moment of his life, when the heavy burden of the world's sin pressed hardest upon him, when the hatred of the world was culminating against him, when the cross stood just before him. It was this: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." If it be asked, what is the spirit of the deepest, truest prayer, I reply that this is the answer. To this test of Jesus' life of prayer, we must bring all our ideas on the subject. He is the living commentary on Christian doctrine, the touchstone and corrective of all our formulas and definitions of the themes of the Christian life. We have never done the best that we can do until we bring our Christian thinking clearly into the light of his life and spirit.

Many passages of Scripture illustrate this conception of our subject: "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John v. 14); and especially: "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." (John xiv. 14). We have only to remember what the "name" signified in the Hebrew mode of thought to see the profound meaning of the phrase, "in my name." The "name" was the symbol of the inmost nature or essence of the thing or person which it represented. Thus God's name is a "strong tower" (Prov. xviii. 10), that is, God himself, in his essential being and perfections, is this. When, therefore, we ask in Christ's name, we ask "in him," in his spirit, which is interpreted to us in the supreme prayer of his life, to which reference has been made.

We thus see the true significance of those phrases which are so commonly used in prayer, "We ask in Christ's name," and the like. By such expressions we should mean that we hold all our petitions subject to the spirit of his life of supreme trust and obedience. When we thus pray, we ask that our prayers may be as his; that they may be purged of all mere self-seeking, and may express the attitude of hearts which are in harmony with God's will, and an unshaken confidence in his providence and grace.

The Scriptures repeatedly inculcate earnestness and fervency in prayer, and all right Christian thinking accords with this idea. Strength and earnestness of desire for all divine blessings spring directly from the consciousness of our weakness and need, and from the realization of our dependence. But some of the misconceptions to which I have alluded, together with

misplaced emphasis in the interpretation of some biblical passages, have often given a wholly erroneous character to the idea of earnestness in prayer. The idea of God's reluctance to give his blessings, and especially the idea of prayer as a kind of bombardment of heaven, have worked powerfully, though probably unconsciously, towards this end. The "wrestling" conception especially has attached itself to the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel, — an inappropriate source from which to derive a doctrine of Christian prayer, not only on account of the obscurity of the narrative's meaning, and the utter untenableness of the literal interpretation upon which the idea of "wrestling" prayer proceeds, but wholly apart from these considerations, because Jacob got nothing for his wrestling until he submitted to the will of God.

Two other passages are often appealed to as proof that prayer should be "importunate." They are the parable of the friend at midnight (Luke xi. 5–8) and that of the unjust judge (Luke xviii. 1–8). Let us consider their bearing on our subject. In the first parable the picture is this: A man is asleep in his house. A friend comes at midnight, clamoring for bread, because a guest in his journey has come to him, and he has nothing to set before him. The householder wishes not to be troubled; he will not rise. But the knocking and clamor continue. He is at length compelled for the sake of quiet, and in order to be rid of the persistent applicant, to rise and give him. It is to be observed that his act is not prompted by love for this suppliant. "He will not rise because

he is his friend." He does not care to relieve his need. He gives him only to be rid of his impudent solicitation. "Because of his importunity he will arise and give him." The word "importunity" occurs only here in the New Testament, and means simply shamelessness, impudence.[1] Is this picture of the drowsy householder a picture of God, and the shameless clamor or "importunity" a picture of Christian prayer? Already Augustine gave the correct interpretation. It is an argument to show that, if in such circumstances the midnight comer secures his request, though not from friendship, how much more will God, the willing Giver, our Father, give his blessings to us. The parable teaches, by the contrast of the two situations, the certainty that prayer will be answered.

The same principles of interpretation are to be applied to the parable of the unjust judge. The parable is designed to teach earnestness and constancy in prayer by an argument *e contrario*. If an unjust judge, all whose qualities are the very opposite of the character of God, at length grants the persistent applicant her request, not from any interest in her case, — for he neither fears God nor regards man, — but only for fear of personal violence;[2] if, I say, under circumstances like these, the petitioner extorts justice from the magistrate, how much more will the sincere, earnest desires of God's children meet their fulfilment. "Importunity," in the sense in which the New Testa-

[1] The Greek word is *ἀναιδία*.

[2] The words which are rendered in the A. V., "Lest by her continual coming she *weary* me," and by the R. V., "Lest she *wear me out*," etc., more probably mean, "Lest she come at last and *beat me*." The verb is *ὑπωπιάζειν*.

ment uses that word, is not a quality of Christian prayer.

No conception of prayer which is inconsistent with the truth that God's will and wisdom ever remain supreme can be correct. God holds before him the interests of the whole system of things and of all his creatures, and it would doubtless be unwise and impossible for him to grant us many things which we might desire. When men pray, for example, that God would suspend the operation of the physical order for their individual or collective benefit, they should always remember that it may well be impossible for the adjustments which they desire to be made without serious harm and far more widespread misfortune than that which they desire God to avert from themselves.

In the foregoing observations I have sought to trace, and briefly to apply, some of the principles which are involved in the doctrine of prayer. I have not considered the question whether the results of prayer may be objective, or are subjective only, because I believe that a true conception of prayer well-nigh obviates the question altogether. Prayer conditions all our relations to God, and those relations are real. The notion that the results of prayer are subjective only seems to rest upon the false assumption that man can live a self-centred life independent of God, and that the deepest facts of his religious nature and life are simply the play within himself of his own thought and feeling, which terminate only upon himself — instead of the operation of love and obedience which have God as their object, and which ally us in all our life vitally to him.

> More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of. . . .
> For what are men better than sheep or goats
> That nourish a blind life within the brain,
> If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
> Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
> For so the whole round world is every way
> Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.[1]

There is an aspect of the Christian doctrine of prayer which seems to me to be sadly overlooked; I mean the necessity of our fulfilling those conditions of obedience, trust, and service on which alone God can give us the richest of his spiritual mercies. Is there not something amounting almost to mockery in the way in which we often ask for the highest spiritual blessings, and then give no thought to fulfilling in our lives the conditions on which alone they can come to us? Perhaps this failure to grasp the deeper import of prayer has its roots in the idea that prayer is mere petition. If, however, we perceive that prayer springs from and expresses the Christian life in all its depths of conviction and devotion, we must see that there are conditions of receptiveness on our part which must be fulfilled, if our prayers are to avail before God. Do we not often pray for blessings which we are all unfitted to receive? Would we not do well to pray that God would make us able and fit to receive his gifts; to open our eyes that we might see them, and our own hearts that we might be able to take them? They wait to descend upon us. They will wait no longer than the time when they can wisely be given.

We should carry our conception of prayer up into

[1] Tennyson, *Passing of Arthur*.

the clear light of Jesus' life and spirit that we may truly learn what prayer, in its deepest meaning and greatest power, is; and then carry it down into the deepest depths of our own hearts and lives, that we may learn whether we do really pray or not. Then would our conception of prayer be broader, deeper, higher — as broad as our life, as deep as our profoundest yearnings and hopes, and as high as the spirit of trust which should bear our adorations and petitions to heaven.

CHAPTER XV

THE FUTURE LIFE

WHAT is the substance of Christian hope respecting the future life? What are we warranted in regarding as the common belief of the Christian world concerning it? It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to answer these questions satisfactorily. Interpretations of Scripture differ so widely, and are so combined with various presuppositions and speculations, that it is difficult to derive from the confusion of ideas and of theories respecting the future a definite doctrine which may be said to be common to the Christian world.

We can say, in general, that the Christian view of the future is one of confidence and hope. Amid the discordant speculations as to the nature and conditions of the life beyond, this constant factor emerges. Christianity is the religion of hope. The Christian looks toward the future life with the conviction that he has nothing to fear. He feels secure of a blessed immortality. This conviction is grounded deep in the very nature of his religion. It is a corrollary of his belief in God. To the mind of the Christian the assurance of Jesus that "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mark xii. 27), appeals with invincible force. Whatever may be his conception of the nature of eternal life, or of the conditions upon which it is bestowed, he rests

secure in the belief that there awaits him a conscious, happy life beyond.

The Christian's estimate of Christ intensifies this conviction. Whatever be one's conception of his person, if he, in any sense, accepts him as an authority in matters of religious faith, he must adopt a hopeful view of the future. No one can believe in Christ at all without sharing, to some extent, his calm, unshaken certitude respecting the reality of the life beyond, and the beatitude of those who have lived a holy life here. The Christian man may accept and give full weight to all the arguments which speculation has developed in favor of the doctrine of immortality; but although all these are estimated at their highest value, it is chiefly the calm look of Jesus into that world of mystery and his reassuring word which carry firm conviction to his heart and in which he securely rests.

We may dwell upon the nature of the soul, reflecting that it is a spiritual entity, persisting through all the changes of the physical organism, and may, with good reason, infer its immortality. When we contemplate the marvellous faculties with which man is endowed, the noble ideals of which he is capable, and the splendid development which is possible to him, it may well seem to us incredible that our brief earthly life is merely "rounded with a sleep." The conviction of immortality which arises in the mind in connection with such reflections is, at times, very strong and persistent. Nevertheless, experience proves that this conviction, when based on such grounds alone, is not constant and immovable. There are times in human life when the stars of hope are well-nigh quenched; when all faith

which rests on man's own arguments and inferences must falter, if it does not wholly fail. Socrates, who knew all these arguments well, and who employed them with such skill, still balances over against each other, in his last hours, the view that death is an eternal sleep, and the idea that it ushers us into a conscious and blessed existence. With all his power to convince others by dwelling on the soul's distinctness and simplicity, he is not able perfectly to assure himself that at death he shall pass into the society of good men and of wise and just gods.

Christianity does not lightly esteem such considerations as I have just referred to. Christian faith grasps and appropriates them, and finds its confidence re-enforced by them. The faith which is primarily grounded in what God is and has revealed, is seen to be suggested by man's own nature. The two sources of assurance meet and agree; but the former always remains primary, the latter secondary. Our conscious life had a beginning; why may it not have an end? We are implicated in a changing and perishing order; decay and death are written on all that we see around us. May we not also perish? The soul is correlated with the body. We have no experience of its action or existence apart from the body. How do we know but it is a product of organization, and thus shares the fate of the perishable physical organism? These are questions which, in a purely speculative view of the subject, must present themselves with no little force. It is true that the best instincts and feelings of the soul seem prophetic of a nobler destiny. But I do not believe that they are sufficient to produce a confident and lasting con-

viction of immortality, unless we, in some way, connect our life with God, and believe that it is included in some great divine purpose. If we are to keep faith and hope respecting the future life, we must be very sure of God. We are living our life girt round by impenetrable mystery. This mystery our reason can never pierce; and we can only remain calm and hopeful in the presence of it, by looking into the heavens above us and seeing that our life is illumined with hope and promise from on high, and interpreted by him who came down from heaven and brought life and immortality to light.

When, however, we raise the question as to the place, mode, and conditions of our future existence, revelation returns no clear answer. We are therefore led to ask after the reason for this reserve of revelation. May we not say in reply, that it appears to have been the purpose of God not to solve all mysteries for us, nor to satisfy our curiosity, but to reveal so much respecting the future life as was needful as a ground of hope, and as an incentive to righteousness, and no more? It is natural enough for us to wish to know more on this subject than has been revealed, but it would be difficult to show that we *need* to know more for purposes of conduct and of character.

In addition to the constant assertion — or, rather, assumption — of the general truth of a future life, the New Testament has much to say concerning two related subjects, the practical import of which we must try to estimate. They are Resurrection and Judgment.

The most explicit teaching in the New Testament respecting the resurrection is found in the discourses

of Jesus as reported in the Gospel of John, and in the fifteenth chapter of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. Jesus declares that he is "the resurrection and the life;" that is, that in him lie the power and guaranty of resurrection, and adds: "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John xi. 25, 26). He also declares that "the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John v. 28, 29). In passages like these it seems to be assumed that resurrection is included in that life which the Son bestows upon those who accept him. Jesus could not promise life in the fullest sense without guaranteeing resurrection, which is essential to its full realization in the world beyond this. These passages, however, give us no description of the nature or process of resurrection.

The difficulty which Paul experienced in securing in the Corinthians an acceptance of the idea of resurrection was the occasion of his discussion of the subject (1 Cor. xv. 35 *seq.*). The Greeks were accustomed to think of the soul as an independent entity, and as, therefore, complete and autonymous in itself, and capable of existing and acting apart from a body. To them the notion of resurrection would, therefore, seem superfluous, if not inconceivable. "How are the dead raised? and with what sort of a body do they come?" were questions which they naturally asked, and which they doubtless thought unanswerable. The apostle replied that some such process as the doctrine of res-

urrection contemplates is constantly going on in nature. Seeds are constantly dying, and rising again in the trees and plants which are their product. Indeed, this product, this goal of their existence, can only be realized by death. The apostle adduces the same analogy which underlies the saying of Jesus : " Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone ; but if it die, it beareth much fruit " (John xii. 24). The idea, then, of a re-embodiment of life in another and higher form of existence is not preposterous, since it is constantly illustrated in the processes of nature.

The apostle next calls the attention of the objectors to the great variety of forms or bodies in which various creatures exist. God has provided embodiments for the different types of life, which are adapted to their needs and environment. The body of the bird is fitted for the air ; that of the fish for the sea. " All flesh is not the same flesh." This consideration suggests the counter-question : Why should we not suppose that, as God provides us with bodies fitted to our earthly life, so he will provide us with bodies fitted to our higher life in the world beyond ?

Paul then directs the attention of his readers to the differing degrees of brightness and beauty in the heavenly bodies. They do not all have the same glory. One star outshines another. Why, then, may we not suppose that, as God varies the brightness of the heavenly bodies according to their place or function in the universe, so he may in the heavenly world bestow upon us bodies as far surpassing those which we now possess, as the sun surpasses some lesser star in

brilliancy? That this will be so the apostle confidently asserts. The present body, he says, is weak, perishable, and corruptible; the future body will be glorious and incorruptible. The present body is that which implicates us in nature. It bears the marks of Adam, our natural head. It shares the qualities and the fate of this changing, perishing world. The future body will bear the marks of the life-giving Christ, our spiritual head. It will be adapted and correlated to that eternal spiritual order into which, at death, we shall enter. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 49).

Such are the general considerations, drawn from natural analogies and from the significance of Christ's life-giving work, which Paul adduces to show the possibility of resurrection and the reasonableness of believing in it. One further point — which the figure of the seed had already suggested — Paul touches upon. The future body, the "spiritual body," is not to be the very same as that which dies and is buried. In using the figure of the seed, he had said: "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but bare grain, . . . but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him." The figure would seem to suggest the idea, that, as the grain which is produced from the seed is different from and more than the seed that is sown, so the future body is not simply the present body resuscitated. On the other hand, the figure would suggest the complementary idea, that, as the full-grown grain is, in some mysterious way, developed out of the seed by an organic process so that it reproduces the seed's essential life-principle, so will the spiritual body

conserve and perpetuate our corporeal life, so that, as the apostle elsewhere says, "being clothed, we shall not be found naked," that is, mere disembodied spirits (2 Cor. v. 3). The essential point which the apostle here urges is, that our bodily life shall be conserved and perpetuated, though purified from all corruption and mortality. Whether or not the apostle holds that an embodiment is essential to the preservation of our personal identity, it is impossible to say. At any rate, he teaches that there will be such an embodiment. This "building from God" which we shall inhabit, this body which God will bestow, is called "spiritual," because it will be pure and imperishable, and fitted to our existence in the eternal, spiritual world. It will be "spiritual" in contrast to the present body, which is "natural" or "psychical," in the sense that it is part and parcel of this perishable world. By as much as heaven shall differ from earth, by so much shall the "spiritual body" exceed the "natural body" which we now inhabit.

The very word "resurrection" inevitably gives rise to the question: Resurrection from what? I suppose that the common answer would be: Resurrection of the body from the grave in which it was buried. But I am quite confident, that, if Paul cherished this idea, it does not represent the primary meaning of his references to resurrection. He never speaks of the resurrection of the body, but always of the resurrection of *persons*. His phrases are: "resurrection of the dead" (persons), and "resurrection from (among) the dead."[1] What, then, is his conception? A person, as for example,

[1] Ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν, ἐκ νεκρῶν.

Christ, rises from among (ἐκ) the dead; or dead persons (νεκροί) arise. It is plain to me that Paul conceives the subject in connection with the Jewish idea of the underworld, Sheol, the realm of departed spirits. This he primarily means when he asserts the resurrection of Christ. His soul was not left in Hades or Sheol.[1] He came forth from the world of the dead, and returned to this world. It is true that he resumed his former body; but his resurrection did not consist primarily, for Paul's mind, in the revivification of his body, but in his return to this world from Hades, or the realm of the dead. The fact of prime significance is that death had no power over *him*. Its portals could not confine him. Of this main truth the resumption of the very body that was buried was an incident, most significant and necessary as evidencing to his disciples and to the world his triumph over earth, but not, *in itself*, the primary fact in which his resurrection "from among the dead," his triumphant release from Hades, consisted. In like manner, in respect to resurrection in general, the apostle's language lays chief stress upon the release of the *person* from the power and realm of death. One aspect of this release is the clothing of the spirit with an appropriate embodiment; but whether that embodiment be strictly identical with the present body, or be in some way only germinally connected with it and developed from it, is a question which is not essential to Paul's doctrine of resurrection. His main emphasis lies on the idea of the deliverance of the person from the dominion of death in the realm of the dead, and on

[1] *Cf.* the application of this expression to the resurrection of Christ by Peter in Acts ii. 27.

the assurance that the personality shall not be dismembered, but conserved in all its parts by the continuance and perfecting of its corporeal, as well as its spiritual, factor.

Such are some of the points concerning the resurrection, on which the strongest emphasis is laid in the New Testament. Yet many interesting questions remain unanswered. The exact relation between the future and the present body is nowhere defined. The resurrection is commonly represented as an event which is to take place at the end of the present world-period. In what state, then, are we to conceive those to be who have passed, and shall pass, into the future life before the resurrection? Do they exist in some intermediate state as disembodied spirits? Have they already attained their final state? If so, what occasion can there be for a future resurrection and judgment? These and many similar questions the New Testament does not appear to me to answer. Revelation has not lifted the curtain which hangs before the mysterious future. It has given certain great practical assurances which have an inestimable value for every heart that accepts them; since they prove to be a source of comfort, hope, and joy amid the perplexing problems of life, and in the face of the dread mystery, death.

The doctrine of judgment pervades the Bible from beginning to end. It is also echoed in the conscience, and attested in the experience, the literature, and the legislation of mankind. The notion of judgment is inseparable from the Christian conception of God. Since God is essentially holy, he must approve goodness and disapprove sin. Judgment is, then, based in the very

being of God. Were there no sin, judgment would be but the approving and favoring action of God toward those who live in harmony with himself. Against sin, however, judgment is the reaction of God's holy nature, disapproving and repudiating that which is opposed to it. It is the same holiness which condemns or approves according to the relation and attitude of men towards God's character and law. God is unchangeable in his essence, and his wrath against sin is but the reverse side of the approval which his holy love accords to righteousness.

Judgment is represented in the New Testament, both as a continuous process and as a future event. We may unite these two conceptions by conceiving of the future judgment as the culmination of the process, and the declaration of its results. The judgment of the world is constantly going on. The judgment is, that light is come into the world. Light cannot help but judge, because it reveals what is. The truth separates men according to the attitude which they take toward it; in other words, men judge themselves by their choices, conduct, and character. The world is continually enacting its own judgment. "The history of the world," says Schiller, "is the judgment of the world." There is also a true sense in which God or Christ judges men. Judgment is incident to a moral system. The conditional cause of judgment is the attitude or character of men, but the ultimate ground is the Author of the system whose nature and law the system expresses. Judgment, both present and final, is inseparable from the nature of God and from the existence of a moral system. Judgment is grounded in God's eternal righteousness.

It would be, however, radically inconsistent with Christian teaching to represent the divine judgment as a mere rendering to every man, with absolute equivalence, of the reward to which his deeds entitle him. This conception would be fundamentally opposed to the Christian gospel of grace. It would be a denial of the principle that God can consistently treat men better than they deserve. God never ceases to be gracious. "His mercy endureth forever." Even his judgment is a gracious judgment. If with juridical precision he marked all iniquities, none could stand. The whole biblical doctrine of forgiveness, of grace, and of atonement, rests upon the idea that it is the wish and purpose of God not to proceed in the treatment of humanity upon the mere *quid pro quo* principle, but upon the principle of generosity, graciously forgiving sin, and liberally rewarding the undeserving upon certain prescribed and essential conditions. The doctrine of judgment is sometimes presented in a purely naturalistic manner, as if there were only inevitable penalty for every sin, and no forgiveness or recovery. This method of thought belongs to a necessitarian philosophy which includes even the Creator in its mechanical scheme of the universe, which substitutes fate for the living God, and turns into a pitiless retributive machine this moral world over which the Father of spirits presides. This method of thought is germane to Stoicism and to the later Rabbinism, but it is the denial of Christ.

We find that in the New Testament the judgment is constantly associated with the person, the work, and the coming of Christ. God commits all judgment to the Son (John v. 22). He is fitted to judge humanity

because he is the Son of man (John v. 27). His work is, primarily, salvation; but judgment is inseparable from it, since his truth must judge men according to their acceptance or rejection of it. The doctrine of judgment must, therefore, be construed in accordance with the doctrines of Christ's person and work. All men are judged with a gracious judgment who do not absolutely repudiate the mercy of God. This principle is but a corollary of the truth that God is gracious — a truth which is absolutely fundamental in the gospel. If any man suffers the full and exact consequences of his sins, it must be because he spurns the divine favor and forgiveness, and puts himself upon the plane of law, refusing thereby to accept the divine mercy. If, as the New Testament teaches, it is the will of God that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. ii. 4), there can no man be finally lost to his true destiny whom it is morally possible for God to save.

If we correlate the doctrine of judgment with the biblical conception of God, and with the fundamental principles of the gospel of salvation, we must hold it to be an essential principle of eschatology that God always has done, and always will do, all that perfect wisdom and love permit or require to save men. The judgment can only issue in the forfeiture of his true destiny by any human being through his own wilful and persistent perversion of his moral nature. The doctrine so long current in theology, that God from eternity consigned a portion of mankind to everlasting misery, and the common representation that, at a certain point, the mercy of God breaks down, and that thereupon he turns in revenge upon men, did not

spring from the Christian conception of God, and cannot be harmonized with it. The New Testament and the reason and conscience of humanity agree in representing the retributions which follow sin as the inevitable consequences of sinful life and character. The misery, pain, and loss into which sin at length plunges the soul are the consequences of the sin itself, bringing forth fruit after its kind.[1] These consequences God is ever seeking to avert by the offers of his gracious forgiveness. God leaves nothing undone that can be done for man's salvation. But to save a soul that will not be saved is impossible. The fearful possibility of the loss of the soul cannot, therefore, be denied. The idea of eternal sinning, and the correlative idea of eternal punishment, cannot be excluded by considerations drawn from the divine goodness, since God is also just and man is free. Hence our Lord warned men with solemn and awful words of this terrible goal to which persistence in sin and contempt of divine mercy must inevitably lead. No just exegesis can explain away those terrible words of the Saviour concerning the outer darkness, the unquenchable fire, and the sin that hath never forgiveness. Nor can any sound philosophy deny their meaning and the reality of the peril to which they refer.

1 The essence of the Christian doctrine of retribution is powerfully presented in the great epic of Dante. Dr. William T. Harris, in his work on Dante, states its substance in these words: "The threefold future world presents an exhaustive picture of man's relations to his deeds. Whatever man does, he does to himself; therefore the effects are found in himself." My colleague, Professor Porter, has called my attention to an expression of the same conception in Philo: "Those who think they are doing good or ill to others will be found, in either case, to be doing it to themselves." *Quod deterius*, etc., § 17.

Respecting the nature and conditions of the heavenly life, no full and clear revelation has been granted us. The representations of heaven which are given in Scripture are chiefly symbolic and figurative. Their essential import is that the life of heaven is a life of sinless blessedness. This life involves the perpetual presence of Christ and perfect fellowship with him. In a word, heaven means the completion of the spiritual life which is begun here. The New Testament teaches that eternal life is already begun on earth in those who live the Christian life (John vi. 47, 54), and that the Christian is already a citizen of the heavenly world (Phil. iii. 20). The principles of the Christian life which are applicable in this world are really changeless and eternal, and must, therefore, be applicable to the soul in all the stages of its progress. Heaven must be the consummation of every good desire, every holy motive, and every noble effort which we ever cherish or put forth on earth. It is the Christian life in its full fruition; the most perfect possible realization of knowledge and holiness of which the soul is capable.

It seems essential to this conception of the perfect life that it should be one of growth. So far as we can judge from our earthly experience, constant progress must be an element of man's complete happiness. The human soul appears to be a growing thing, attaining its full consciousness and command of itself, and so realizing its destiny, only by continuous growth. Man can never find his final goal in an arrest of development, but only in perpetual progress and achievement. For the infinite Being blessedness must consist in his own absolute and eternal perfection. Finite beings like

man, however, are by their very nature subject to limitation. Their blessedness must consist in perpetual striving towards perfection, thereby transcending more and more their limitations in knowledge and in character.

The Bible represents heaven as a society, and we can only think of it as such. Man is a social being, and he can only find his true destiny in society. This fundamental conception of the perfect life carries with it the idea of our recognition of one another in heaven, and of the perpetuation of the relations of love and service which have existed on earth. Love is in its essence a social principle, and heaven will be the perfected life of love. Thus it appears that the spiritual life must be the same in principle, both on earth and in heaven. It is the life of love in its very nature. It can never be anything else since love never fails or falls away (1 Cor. xiii. 8).[1] Thus the future life must be the completion of the life of love which is begun here. The pure and holy fellowships of earth must be purged of all imperfection, and be elevated and enriched through the ever enlarging capacity of human souls to appreciate and realize all the qualities that contribute to the perfection of personal life.

The heavenly life must also be a life of service. Heaven means fellowship with God and likeness to him, and since God is love, it must mean the full realization of the life of love, in the society of which heaven is composed. But service is a fruit of love and is inseparable from it. Only in conformity to the laws of love and service, which have their seat in the divine

[1] Οὐδέποτε πίπτει.

perfection, can men attain the highest joys of their existence, or realize the true significance of their being.

I have read that when Thomas à Kempis was a student, his teacher asked the class to which he belonged, what passage of Scripture gave to them the most attractive idea of heaven. One said, "And they shall see his face;" and another, "There shall be no more sorrow;" and another, "There shall be no more death;" but Thomas à Kempis, the youngest member of the class, replied, "And his servants shall serve him." And it should be a part of Christian hope to expect that larger spheres of service await us in the world of God, since, as Archbishop Trench has so finely said —

> We doubt not that in other worlds above,
> There must be other offices of love;
> That other tasks and ministries there are,
> Since it is promised that his servants there
> Shall serve him still.

INDEX

Animal, the, how essentially distinguished from man, 18 *sq.*

Arguments, the theistic, 41 *sq.*

Atonement, doctrine of, 158 *sq.;* the correlate of sin, 158; relation of the idea of God to, 158–160; import of the doctrine, 160 *sq.;* biblical doctrine of, 167, *sq.;* meets the ends of punishment, 170 *sq.;* a perpetual and eternal process, 171 *sq.*

Augustine on the native religiousness of man, 20; quoted, 30, 149; his theory of original sin, 152; on love, 210.

Bible, the, as a product and record of divine revelation, 52 *sq.;* centres in Christ, 58 *sq.;* inspiration of, 61 *sq.*

Brooks, Phillips, Dr., quoted, 48.

Christ, person and work of, according to John, 25–27; according to Paul, 27 *sq.;* his relation to natural religion, 50, 51; central in the Bible, 58 *sq.;* his teaching concerning the Fatherhood of God, 74 *sq.;* bearing of his teaching upon the doctrine of the Trinity, 89 *sq.;* the person and character of, 105 *sq.;* completeness of his character, 108 *sq.;* incarnation of, 116 *sq.;* relation of the Spirit's work to the work of, 125 *sq.*, 133 *sq.*

Conscience, its sense of guilt for sin. 146 *sq.*

Dante on the consequences of conduct, 241.

Darwin, Charles, quoted, 34.

Doctrine, see Theology.

Edwards, Jonathan, on faith, 192.

Experience, Christian, see Life.

Faith, natural tendency to, in man, 22 *sq.;* Christian doctrine of, 191 *sq.;* as trust, 191–194; as a personal relation to Christ, 194, 195; a growing thing, 195, 196; its saving significance, 196–200; its intellectual element, 200–202; as a presupposition of prayer, 220.

Fatherhood of God, 74 *sq.;* its relation to the doctrine of the Trinity, 100 *sq.;* presupposed in prayer, 216.

Fisher, Dr. G. P., quoted, 95.

God, some form of belief in, universal, 34 *sq.;* various forms of belief in, 37 *sq.;* grounds of belief in, 39 *sq.;* and revelation, 52 *sq.;* character of 71 *sq.;* Fatherhood of, 74 *sq.;* his love and righteousness, 79 *sq.;* effect in theology of one-sided conceptions of, 83 *sq.;* as Trinity, 87 *sq.;* relation of atonement to the idea of, 161 *sq.;* love central in, 210.

Habit, power of, 149 *sq.*

Hare, J. C., quoted, 135.

Harris, Dr. W. T., cited, 241.

Hitchcock. Dr. R. D., on "eternal atonement," 173, 174.

Holiness, see Righteousness.

Hugo, Victor, quoted, 147, 148.

Hutton, R. H., on the Trinity, 100, 101.

Immortality, grounds of belief in, 229, 230.
Incarnation, the significance of, 116 *sq.*; relation of sin to, 139; relation of the intercession of Christ to, 186 *sq.*
Inerrancy, alleged, of the Bible, 64 *sq.*
Inspiration of the Bible, 61 *sq.*
Intercession of Christ, doctrine of, 176 *sq.*; biblical representations of, 178–180; practical religious significance of, 180 *sq.*; relation of, to atonement, 182–185; relation of, to the incarnation, 186, 187; emphasizes the objective character of Christ's work, 187–190.
Jewish History, peculiarity of, 56 *sq.*
John the apostle, his view of Christ as the "Word," 25 *sq.*; his doctrine of God's Fatherhood and man's sonship, 76, 77; his doctrine of Christ's person, 89, 190, 92; influenced by the Spirit, 132.
Judgment, doctrine of, 237–241.
Justice, see Righteousness; in God, as related to atonement, 160 *sq.*
Justin Martyr, quoted, 30.
Kant on the "good will," 149.
Kempis à Thomas cited, 244.
Life, relation of doctrine to, 1 *sq.*; its comprehension of thought and, therefore, of theology, 12 *sq.*; importance for, of the doctrine of God, 71 *sq.*; the spiritual, fostered by the Spirit, 131 *sq.*; the future, doctrine of, 228 *sq.*
Lincoln, Prof. Heman, on theories of original sin and evolution, 156.
Longfellow, H. W., quoted, 23.
Love as a name for the ethical nature of God, 79 *sq.*; in its relation to the doctrine of the Trinity, 99 *sq.*; centrality of, in religion, 203; a personal relation, 204; an intelligent choice, 205; a motive to service, 206; the basal principle of society, 207, 208; scope of, 208–210; the opposite of sin, 210; essential in God, 210 *sq.*; reflected in nature, 211 *sq.*; leads to self-giving, 213 *sq.*
Moral nature of man, significance of, 18 *sq.*
Müller, Julius, his doctrine of "original sin," 153, 154.
Mysticism, true and false, 127, 128.
New England Theology, its doctrine of sin, 154.
Newman, J. H., on "unaided reason," 24; on "the light which lighteth every man," 32, 33.
Paul, his view of revelation through Christ, 27 *sq.*; his doctrine of Christ's person, 89; his doctrine of resurrection, 232 *sq.*
Personality, meaning of, 17 *sq.*
Peter the apostle, development of, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, 132.
Porter, Prof. F. C., on the relation of the New Testament to Christ, 68; cited, 241.
Prayer, doctrine of, 216 *sq.*; rests upon Fatherhood of God, 216; presupposed God's willingness to give, 217, 218; more than petition, 219; its relation to faith, 220; subjection to God's will, 221; "in Christ's name," 222; doctrine of, in the parables of the friend at midnight and of the unjust judge, 223–225; whether or not merely subjective in its effects, 225; the conditions on which it is answered, 226, 227.
Prophecy, Hebrew, significance of, 55 *sq.*
Reason, whether or not ever "unaided," 24, 25; its testimony to the existence of God, 42 *sq.*; its relation to the mystery of the Trinity, 93 *sq.*
Religion, relation of, to theology, 1 *sq.* See also Life. Natural to

Religion, *Continued.*
man, 20 *sq.*; no people wholly without, 21, 22; grounded in revelation, 25 *sq.*
Resurrection, biblical doctrine of, 231–237.
Revelation, universal, 25 *sq.*, and always Christian, 31, 32; relation of the natural and the Christian, 49 *sq.*; in its relation to the Bible, 52 *sq.*; importance of the doctrine of, as compared with that of inspiration, 62 *sq.*
Righteousness, the, of God, 79 *sq.*
Robertson, F. W., on the origin of the cultus of Mary, 114, 115.
Rothe, Richard, quoted, 59.
Rückert quoted, 48.
Sacrifice of self foreshadowed in nature, 211 *sq.*
Selfishness as the essence of sin, 139; and self-love, 141 *sq.*
Self-love distinguished from selfishness, 141 *sq.*
Shakespeare quoted, 148.
Shedd, Dr. W. G. T., cited, 153.
Sin, the doctrine of, 138 *sq.*; relation of the incarnation to, 139; as selfishness, 141 *sq.*; as "missing the mark," 143; alien to man's true nature, 143, 144; relation of, to the flesh, 143, 144; biblical representations of, 146, 147; representations of, in literature, 147–149; moral effects of, 149 *sq.*; theories of the origin of, 152 *sq.*; the Augustinian theory, 152, 153; federal theory, 153; Julius Müller's theory, 153, 154; New England theory, 154; comments on these theories, 155–157; moral consequences of, 241.
Smith, Dr. Henry B., on the intercession of Christ, 183–185.
Sonship of men to God, 75 *sq.*
Soul, the, "naturally Christian," 17 *sq.*; immortality of, 227 *sq.*
Spirit, the Holy, doctrine of, 122 *sq.*; emphasizes the presence of God in human life and history, 123 *sq.*; relation of, to the work of Christ, 125 *sq.*; as the fostering power of the spiritual life in men, 131 *sq.*; comes "in Christ's name," 133 *sq.*; his "convicting" function, 136 *sq.*
Stearns, Dr. L. F., on the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, 65; on the character of God, 73, 74; cited, 128.
Strong, Dr. A. H., cited, 153; on eternal atonement, 172.
Tennyson quoted, 118, 202, 214, 215, 219, 226.
Tertullian on the testimony of the soul, 20, 21.
Testament, the Old, revelation in, 53 *sq.*; the New, the relation of its books to Christ, 59 *sq.*
Theology, its relation to life, 1 *sq.*; its differences regarded as important, 3 *sq.*; nature and function of, 6, 7; its value as theory, 7–9; occasion of its development, 9, 10; objections to, 10–12; essentially involved in "life," 12–14; may be regarded from various points of view, 14 *sq.*; its doctrine of God, 71 *sq.*; one-sided conceptions of, concerning God, 83 *sq.*
Trench, R. C., cited, 244.
Trinity, the doctrine of, 87 *sq.*; modal conception of, 91 *sq.*; best method of approaching, 96, 97; in what sense taught in the Bible, 97, 98; its harmony with analogy, 98 *sq.*; deducible from the divine love and Fatherhood, 99 *sq.*; its practical aspects, 102 *sq.*
Unitarianism, its doctrine of God, 88 *sq.*
Whitefield, George, quoted, 30.
Whittier, J. G., quoted, 130, 151.

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